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US & CANADA SOUNDS OF AMERICA

A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

Balada

Cumbres^a. Piano Concerto^b. Cello Concerto^c. Viola Concerto^d. Sonata^e

^dAshan Pillai va ^cDavid Premo vc ^bEnrique Graf pf

Carnegie Mellon Wind Ensemble /

^aDenis Colwell, ^bStephen Story,

^cThomas Thompson, ^dGeorge Vosburgh

Naxos © 8 573064 (80' • DDD)



Most composers are lucky if their works receive a handful of recordings. Thanks

to Naxos, the music of Leonardo Balada is more than generously preserved, from chamber pieces to operas. The focus on the newest disc of Balada creations is music for winds, brass and percussion, with concertos for piano, cello and viola prominently featured – and expertly played by the Carnegie Mellon Wind Ensemble. (Balada has been a faculty member at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh since 1970.) The repertoire represents the Spanish-born American composer in many phases of his career, from electronic and avant-garde sources to neo-classical inclinations.

The electronic element is a subtle inspiration in *Cumbres* ('Heights'), a 1971 'Short Symphony for Band' in which clusters play a large role. Balada has a gift for instrumental layering and chatter, and he takes the players to extremes of range and dynamics with almost giddy modernist delight. He is in a playful mood in the Concerto for piano, winds and percussion (1973), whose soloist – here the crisp, expressive Enrique Graf – enters into animated and Chopin-like dreamy conversation with his colleagues.

The earliest work, the Concerto for cello and nine players (1962, rev 1967), embraces the solo instrument's profound character while also taking into account its nimble possibilities. Four decades later, the Viola Concerto (2009-10) places soloist and ensemble in a cavalcade of vibrant interactions. David Premo and Ashan Pillai, respectively, do the solo honours in these works.

GRAMOPHONE talks to...

Mohammed Fairouz

The young Arab-American composer tells us about his Third Symphony, 'Poems and Prayers'

What's behind 'Poems and Prayers'?

It was commissioned by the Center for Middle East Peace Culture and Development at Northeastern University. The idea, from the start, was to weld together Arab and Israeli poets into a sort of symphonic counterpoint.

And the musical language you employ?

It's *my* musical language, which makes it difficult for me to describe. I will leave it up to critics, musicologists and writers to define it.

It's a long piece, for large forces: how did you keep that all under control?

The key is really to create and develop a compelling narrative: to keep the final note of the work in mind when you compose the first note. And at under an hour, though, it is not really a long piece: it's the same length as Beethoven's 'Eroica' Symphony.



And it's important, you feel, for composers to explore political subjects?

I honestly don't believe that, actually. It is important for me to engage with current foreign policy trends, diplomacy and the history of statecraft, but that certainly doesn't make it important for composers in general to do so. That would be like saying that all writers should be invested in being political analysts. Some writers are interested in poetry, some write novels and fiction, others write foreign policy op-eds or pieces of investigative journalism. Some writers write plays or scripts for movies and so on... I just happen to be a composer who engages these issues, who happens to be a political writer in my music.

The spirit of Stravinsky hovers over the Sonata for ten winds (1979), which again reveals Balada's characteristic rhythmic vitality, inventive sense of colour and exceptional command of instrumental potential. **Donald Rosenberg**

Chiayu

'Journeys'

Urban Sketches^a. Huan^b. Journey to the West^c. Twelve Signs^d. Sparkle^e. Zhi^f

^aRicardo Morales cl ^cSara Huebner, ^eDiana

Wensley tpts ^bDana Cullen hn ^dBrian Santero tbn

^fPierrick Fournes tuba ^cHirono Oka vn ^dChe-Hung

Chen va ^aClancy Newman vc ^fHanchien Lee,

^aNatalie Zhu pfs ^bColine-Marie Orliac hp

^cCiampi Quartet

Naxos American Classics © 8 559713 (76' • DDD)



In this dazzling series of premiere recordings, Chiayu (b1975) unleashes bursts of

creativity in five works composed between 2005 and 2013 for a variety of configurations. If her music may well reflect the accents, sounds and rhythms of her Taiwanese origins, even the uninitiated will feel the impact of her highly attractive musical personality. Whether in *Twelve Signs* for solo viola, based on the signs of the zodiac and played with mesmerising intensity by the Philadelphia Orchestra's Che-Hung Chen; or *Journey to the West*, based on a

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The Boston Modern Orchestra Project and conductor Gil Rose showcase the works of Donald Crockett on their new disc

Ming Dynasty novel about a monk and a monkey king's journey to seek sacred texts in India, played with consummate ease and artistry by Duke University's Ciompi Quartet, the music provides challenges for the players and delights for the listener.

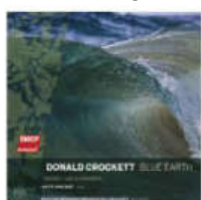
The most delightful is the brass quintet *Sparkle*, written for the opening of Lenfest Hall at the Curtis Institute, its fireworks set off by a young and brilliant ad hoc ensemble. The most serious is *Zhi* for violin and piano, written as part of a counterpoint course at Duke. The most purely beautiful is *Huan*, played with exquisite grace by Coline-Marie Orliac. The most adventurous is *Urban Sketches*, wherein a simple clarinet trio takes a surrealistic walk through New York City, using electronic and acoustic sounds including a Chinese flute. Gretchen Peters's detailed booklet-notes enhance the listening experience, while the audiophile recordings reveal in every bar Chiayu's wide palette of colours. **Laurence Vittes**

Crockett

Wedge. Viola Concerto^a. Blue Earth

^aKate Vincent *va*

Boston Modern Orchestra Project / Gil Rose
BMOP/sound (P) 1042 (63' • DDD/DSD)



The orchestra is a vessel for swirls of colour and animated incident in the creative

hands of Donald Crockett. The three works the Boston Modern Orchestra Project perform on this new disc show the American composer fully engaged with nature, especially as experienced in his home state of California, as well as myriad emotional states. Crockett has a knack for developing musical kernels and summoning rich contrasts of atmosphere.

The oldest piece, from 1990, is *Wedge*, which explodes with striking motivic ideas and varied textures. Crockett pays tribute to Stravinsky's Violin Concerto in what booklet annotator Christopher Hailey aptly describes as 'a fleeting allusion to the distinctive "passport chord" that opens each of Stravinsky's four movements'. But what we mostly hear in less than 10 minutes is an explosion of brilliant woven materials.

Crockett wrote his Viola Concerto (2012) for his wife, Kate Vincent, whose focus and sensitivity are stamped on every moment of this vivid four-movement work. The piece takes the soloist and orchestra through a kaleidoscopic series of encounters – at turns warm, playful, argumentative and whirlwind. It is a superb addition to the viola repertoire.

The five movements of *Blue Earth* (2002) portray aspects of nature – beauty, majesty and fury – without ever sounding like modern-day Debussy. Crockett paints his land- and seascapes with exceptional finesse and power, finding inventive ways to meld winds, brass, strings and percussion into

something of elemental eloquence. Gil Rose and the Boston ensemble raise the sonic roof when they aren't savouring the delicate pleasures in Crockett's music.

Donald Rosenberg

Fairouz

'Poems and Prayers'

Symphony No 3, 'Poems and Prayers'^a. Tahrir^b

^aSasha Cooke *sop* ^aDavid Kravitz *bar* ^bDavid Krakauer *cl* ^aUCLA Chorale; ^aUCLA University Chorus; UCLA Philharmonia / Neal Stulberg
Sono Luminus (M) 2 (CD + DSL92177
(71' • DDD)



Mohammed Fairouz's Symphony No 3, 'Poems and Prayers', intended as a musical

meditation on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, demonstrates the composer's ability to bring down to human scale large blocks of sound and passion, at times as vast as the great choral works of Beethoven and Verdi. Setting texts ranging from the ancient Aramaic Kaddish to modern Israeli and Arabic poetry by Mahmoud Darwish, Yehuda Amichai and Fadwa Tuqan, Fairouz creates a mostly bleak landscape in which hope is to be raised. Even the half-hour final movement, an epic, chaotic setting of Amichai's 'Memorial Day for the War Dead', is haunted by dread, so that the quiet moments are the best, most authentic;

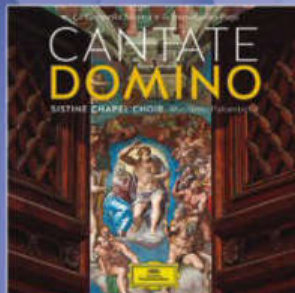
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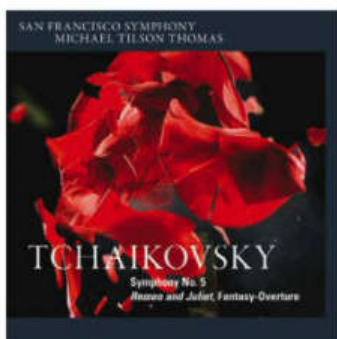


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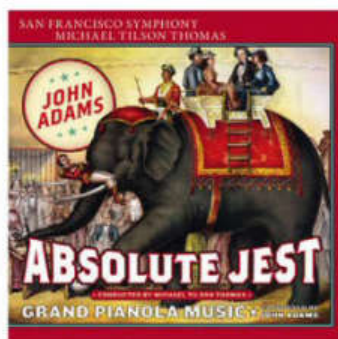
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The Harlem Quartet play with 'probing intensity' on Cantaloupe's recording of Lang and Wellman's chamber opera, the difficulty of crossing a field

the 'Lullaby', for example, set to excerpts from Darwish's *State of Siege*, and the 'Minyan' that follows.

In Fairouz's *Tabrir* for clarinet and orchestra, the initial instalment in a three-movement concerto inspired by the Egyptian revolution, the people's voices are represented by the orchestra while the clarinet expresses the voice of the individual protester with a rich vocabulary of Middle Eastern scales and wails. It is an ingenious, unconventional conceit, which shows Fairouz completely at home writing for the clarinet and reasonably comfortable when balancing the soloist against other winds or brass; but when it's a matter of writing for the whole orchestra and clarinet, things get more formal and less convincing.

While clarinetist David Krakauer plays with his customary blend of virtuosity and abandon, Neal Stulberg leads the large vocal, choral and orchestral forces to heroic efforts, recorded with power and impact in UCLA's iconic Royce Hall.

Laurence Vittes

D Lang

the difficulty of crossing a field

Cree Carrico, Laquita Mitchell, Mari-Yan Pringle, Beverly O'Regan Thiele *sops* **Nicole Mitchell** *contr*
Martin Bakari, Isaiah Robinson *tens* **Christopher Burchett, Jorell Williams** *bass* **Brandon Coleman**
bass **Jay O Sanders, Daniel Zippi** *actors*
Harlem Quartet / Douglas Kinney Frost
 Cantaloupe © CA21107 (76' • DDD)



More than a decade after its premiere, composer David Lang and playwright Mac Wellman's *the difficulty of crossing a field* has finally received a recording, and a splendid one. The chamber opera is based on Ambrose Bierce's one-page story about a planter in Selma, Alabama, in 1854 who vanishes, never to return. The narrative is structured in interludes and seven 'tellings' featuring Williamson (the planter), his wife, daughter, brother, neighbours, slaves and magistrate. It is an ambiguous and mysterious tale given haunting life by Lang and Wellman, whose one-act work blends arias and choruses with spoken text.

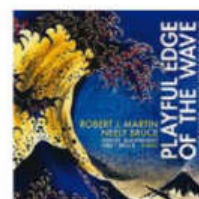
Lang employs repeated musical figures with subtle skill to heighten the drama and provide moments of release. As the characters muse on the fate of Williamson, the tale enters the realm of the surreal, with the planter among those describing the events leading up to the disappearance. Lang's music both underlines inner emotions and conveys the views of the community in boldly etched sequences. The score contains soaring episodes, especially for the distraught Mrs Williamson and her daughter, sung with magnificent urgency, respectively, by Beverly O'Regan Thiele and Cree Carrico. The rest of the cast are excellent.

The story's pathos and intimacy are achieved in part through Lang's mesmerising writing for string quartet, which sustains an enigmatic aura through continuous interweaving of motifs and lines. Played at the work's 2002 premiere by the Kronos Quartet, the score here is performed with probing intensity by the Harlem Quartet under conductor Douglas Kinney Frost. **Donald Rosenberg**

RJ Martin • N Bruce

'Playful Edge of the Wave'

N Bruce *Homage to Seb. Improvisations*
RJ Martin *100 Views of Mt Fuji: 100 Pieces in 100 Minutes, 'Homage to Hokusai'. Stone & Feather*
Shirley Blankenship, Neely Bruce *pfs*
 Ravello © © RR7909 (146' • DDD)



When composer Robert J Martin set out to begin the '100 pieces in 100 minutes' that encompass his piano cycle *100 Views of Mt Fuji* (inspired by the woodcuts of Hokusai), he stipulated that no two pieces would be alike. And, indeed, they are not alike, but they're marked by similar stylistic and gestural fingerprints such as spiky, asymmetric shifts between melodic cells and lean, dissonant chords. Their overall harmonic neutrality and lack

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The Cavatina Duo offer a disc of 'exceedingly pleasant medleys' for guitar and flute on Bridge

of surface virtuosity recalls early John Cage or Christian Wolff's short piano pieces.

If you listen to all 100 minutes or large chunks of the cycle uninterrupted and without looking at the track list, you'll have a hard time discerning when one piece begins and another ends. Their distinctions reveal themselves more readily via individual scrutiny, such as No 50's unpredictable register changes, No 66's quirky, discontinuous left-hand ostinatos, the terse and tango-like No 46 or the wide interval leaps within No 89's steady and continuous single line. If you can meet the music's restricted dynamics and expressive reserve halfway, there's much to enjoy, albeit in small doses. On the other hand, Martin's dramatic and daring *Stone & Feather* abounds with dynamism, communicative immediacy and panache. Since pianist Shirley Blankenship worked closely on this music with the composer, one assumes that her performances are authoritative.

Composer/pianist Neely Bruce's wide stylistic reach and fluent keyboard idiom come through in a set of 13 off-the-cuff improvisations that sound as carefully considered as any good notated music. For example, the blurry Impressionistic arpeggios of 'The Feline Sea' have shape and variety in regard to timing and pitch choices. 'Drunken Leaves' is a waltz featuring subtle *sostenuto* pedal effects in the left-hand accompanying patterns and

sudden silences. 'Crystal Tide' alternates between hymnbook chords and gently declamatory unison melodies. Bruce's 10-minute *Homage to Seb* conveys a more casual, improvisatory air, yet it's through-composed. In fact, Bruce derives his source material from 400-plus dissonant chords in the A minor Fugue from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book 1. You'd never know just from listening. To what extent these composers' 'image-based' titles enhance one's musical perception remains an open question. **Jed Distler**

'Cavatina at the Opera'

Borne Fantaisie brillante sur des airs de Carmen (arr Zsafka) **M Giuliani** Potpourri tiré de l'opéra Tancredi, Op 76 **Sor** Introduction and Variations on a Theme by Mozart, Op 9 (arr Thomas) **Taffanel** Fantasy on Der Freischütz (arr Thomas) **A Thomas** Variations on The Carnival of Venice (after Tárrega and Briccialdi). Fantasia on Themes from La traviata (based on Krakamp and Briccialdi)

Cavatina Duo

Bridge © BRIDGE9448 (64' • DDD)



For their relentlessly mellifluous new recital on Bridge, Eugenia Moliner and Denis Azabagic, known as the Cavatina Duo, worked with Alan Thomas, still the

only guitarist to take top prize at the International Gaudeamus Interpreters Competition in Holland, to create a menu of exceedingly pleasant medleys, none shorter than eight minutes, arranged from flute- and guitar-based originals.

Despite the lovely playing, however, only Thomas's own *Variations on The Carnival of Venice*, 'more or less combining the famous versions by Briccialdi and Tárrega', and adding new material 'as well as throwing in the odd quote from other celebrated carnival-related pieces', attains any kind of real musical quality, with its intriguingly Latin tinge and swing. And while Thomas's arrangement of Sor's iconic *Introduction and Variations on a Theme by Mozart* (of which there are more than 50 recordings in various configurations) maintains its interest, his disparaging in the booklet-notes of its *Magic Flute* theme, 'Das klinget so herrlich', as 'one of the least interesting and inspired melodies from the opera', seems uncharitable considering its being one of the opera's most magical, most Mozartian and most beloved moments.

Otherwise, the slight charms of standard-issue operatic potpourris on themes from *Carmen*, *Tancredi*, *La traviata* and (most disappointingly) *Der Freischütz*, recorded in Ganz Hall at Roosevelt University, where Moliner and Azabagic are faculty artists on the Chicago College of Performing Arts, fade quickly. **Laurence Vittes**

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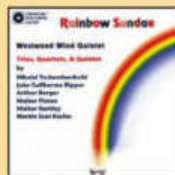
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Reflecting the changes, celebrating excellence

I've now worked on 14 *Gramophone* Awards. Not as many as my colleague James Jolly, this year notching up 30. But, looking back to 2002, it's fascinating to compare our winners then to today. Happily, many of the names remain familiar: Leif Ove Andsnes, Rinaldo Alessandrini, Sakari Oramo, Harrison Birtwistle, all winners back in 2002, featured in this year's shortlist – our 34-page Awards section will reveal how they fared. Which isn't to imply stasis; many of this year's shortlisted musicians were entirely unfamiliar names back then – one of them, Benjamin Grosvenor, a mere 10 years old.

While I'm not claiming there was anything uniquely significant about 2002, it did mark the point at which the weighting between major and independent labels shifted. That year, the honours were evenly shared between the two. Prior to that, the majors received most awards. After 2002 the trend begins to move towards this year's situation in which the indies account for three times as many awards as the majors. With the greatest of genuine respect to the majors, who continue to produce many fantastic recordings (could one imagine this issue's Recording of the Month, a star-studded studio *Aida*, being made by anyone but the likes of Warner Classics?), this is not an unhealthy situation. The indies are, after all, far more numerous – it shows that our Awards are reflecting the sheer diversity of what is being released. That Award-winners are just as likely to emerge from a small-sized or in-house label as from the classical departments of corporate giants is cheering evidence that whatever shape the future of our industry takes,



it's one about which we can be optimistic. This isn't a major vs indie polemic: I'm thrilled to see that both are excellent.

But there are other ways that 2002 had marked something of a turning point. It was the first time an orchestra's in-house label (LSO Live, for Berlioz's *Les Troyens*) triumphed. It was also the Awards that followed the launch of the iPod. Both developments are taken entirely for granted now, having helped shape the recording world we see today, resolving but also provoking challenges that the industry is still getting to grips with.

Today, you can buy the Award-winning recordings from a CD shop – and if that's the way you collect music, I'd urge you to do so; such institutions are fewer in number than they were in 2002 and those that are left deserve your support. But you can also sample, stream and download them from many digital retailers – not least Qobuz, sponsors of our Recording of the Year – and this will, I know, be not only the preference but the unquestioned, automatic action for many readers, young and old. Majors or indies, label stables or in-house, CD or download: much is familiar but much has changed when I look back over those 14 Awards. Two things haven't though. Statistics show that the *Gramophone* Awards still make a significant difference to the sales of the winning recordings, which is down to you, our readers. And the music-making itself remains just as extraordinary, which is down to the artists and teams behind all this year's winners, to whom I extend my congratulations, and my gratitude.
martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'I first fell in love with the music of Vaughan Williams in the 1960s, so writing this month's Collection on

The Lark Ascending was a chance to reacquire myself with an old friend,' writes **DAVID GUTMAN**. 'But might *The Lark* have acquired new plumage? And what might that mean for a piece at once immutable and open-ended?'



This month's Icons article is a tribute to a pianist whose many recordings hold a special place in the catalogue,

as **GERAINT LEWIS** explains: 'Stephen Kovacevich seems to have a direct line to Schubert, both in concert and luckily on disc, and for me he has always been the perfect pianist, who gets straight to the heart of the matter.'



'Writing about Oliver Knussen was an especial pleasure,' says **RICHARD WHITEHOUSE**, who has written

this month's Contemporary Composer feature. 'Others of his contemporaries may have amassed a larger output or assumed a more provocative stance, but quality is what matters in the final instance.'

THE REVIEWERS Andrew Achenbach • Nalen Anthoni • Tim Ashley • Mike Ashman • Philip Clark • Alexandra Coghlan • Rob Cowan (consultant reviewer) • Jeremy Dibble • Peter Dickinson • Jed Distler • Duncan Druce • Adrian Edwards • Richard Fairman • David Fallows • David Fanning • Fabrice Fitch • Jonathan Freeman-Attwood • Caroline Gill • David Gutman • Christian Hoskins • Lindsay Kemp • Philip Kennicott • Richard Lawrence • Andrew Mellor • Ivan Moody • Bryce Morrison • Jeremy Nicholas • Christopher Nickol • Geoffrey Norris • Richard Osborne • Stephen Plaistow • Peter Quantrill • Guy Rickards • Malcolm Riley • Marc Rochester • Julie Anne Sadie • Edward Seckerson • Hugo Shirley • Pwyl ap Siôn • Harriet Smith • David Patrick Stearns • David Threasher • David Vickers • John Warrack • Richard Whitehouse • Arnold Whittall • Richard Wigmore • William Yeoman

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is the magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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EDITORIAL

Phone 020 7738 5454 Fax 020 7733 2325 email gramophone@markallengroup.com
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER Martin Cullingford
DEPUTY EDITOR Sarah Kirkup / 020 7501 6365
REVIEWS EDITOR Hugo Shirley / 020 7501 6367
ONLINE CONTENT EDITOR James McCarthy / 020 7501 6366

SUB-EDITOR David Threasher / 020 7501 6370
ART DIRECTOR Dinah Lone / 020 7501 6689
PICTURE EDITOR Sunita Sharma-Gibson / 020 7501 6369

AUDIO EDITOR Andrew Everard
EDITORIAL ADMINISTRATOR Libby McPhee
LIBRARIAN Richard Farr
THANKS TO Hannah Nepil, Marija Đurić Spare and Charlotte Gardner
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF James Jolly

ADVERTISING

Phone 020 7738 5454 Fax 020 7733 2325 email gramophone.ads@markallengroup.com
SALES MANAGER
 Esther Zuke / 020 7501 6368
SENIOR SALES EXECUTIVE
 Luke Battersby / 020 7501 6373

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BACK ISSUES

0800 137201 (UK) +44 (0)1722 716997 (overseas) subscriptions@markallengroup.com

PUBLISHING

Phone 020 7738 5454
HEAD OF MARKETING AND DIGITAL STRATEGY Luca Da Re / 020 7501 6362
MARKETING EXECUTIVE Edward Craggs / 020 7501 6384
DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT Matthew Cianfarani
DATA AND DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR Tom Pollard
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Richard Hamshire / 01722 716997
PRODUCTION MANAGER Jon Redmayne
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR Sally Boettcher / 01722 716997
SUBSCRIPTIONS MANAGER Chris Hoskins / 01722 716997
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR Siân Harrington
MANAGING DIRECTOR Jon Benson
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Ben Allen
CHAIRMAN Mark Allen

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DELPHIAN



Eddie McGuire: Entangled Fortunes Red Note Ensemble

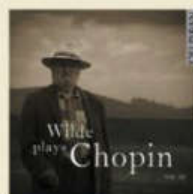
DCD34157



Eddie McGuire is one of Scotland's greatest living composers. In the second of two discs programmed to initiate their new recording partnership with Delphian, Red Note Ensemble bring passion and care to this music – a token of the regard in which McGuire is held by Scottish musicians of all generations.

'Red Note is the ideal ensemble to champion McGuire's folk-rich music: the players shift between silvery laments, robust dances and angular squalls in a blink'
— The Guardian, July 2015

'Minimalist and modernist influences argue with traditional tonal- and modal-based material to forge a rich synthesis ... Performances are as vital and coherent as the music itself'
— Gramophone, August 2015, EDITOR'S CHOICE



DCD34159

Wilde plays Chopin Vol III David Wilde piano

The reviews that greeted Vol II of David Wilde's Chopin last year spoke of his playing as 'vast, monumental, inexorable ... a wealth of colour and detail, all in service of an overarching design of crystal clarity.' Here is a further instalment of this extraordinary Chopin journey. As he sat down to record the B flat minor Scherzo, Wilde said to Delphian producer Paul Baxter: 'I've been playing this piece for 73 years – I don't think I need a score!' This is Chopin absorbed and reshaped: the radical expressive outcome of a lifetime's involvement with this inexhaustible composer.

'If you like Chopin given with a steep and original slant rather than the sort that garners prizes on the competition circuit and in the exam room, then this is for you ... Excellently recorded'
— Gramophone, August 2015



DCD34150 (2 discs)

J.S. Bach: Suites for Solo Cello Philip Higham

Philip Higham's debut recording, a disc of Benjamin Britten's three solo suites, won acclaim across the board, including Disc of the Month accolades from both *Gramophone* and *BBC Music Magazine*. He has chosen to follow it directly with the Bach suites which were Britten's inspiration, and which remain pinnacles of the repertoire for any cellist. Not afraid to question received wisdom, Higham's thoughtful yet daring approach leads him to combine elements of period and modern style both in his playing and in his choice of instruments – a 1697 cello for the first five suites and a 2013 five-string instrument to bring out the extraordinary range of colours with which Bach invested the crowning Sixth.

'compelling readings ... Higham avoids the romanticist's self-indulgently furrowed brow without sacrificing intensity'
— Sunday Times, August 2015

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genius of Perlman.”*
Daniel Barenboim



GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews

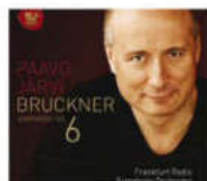


RECORDING OF THE MONTH



VERDI
Aida
Sols; Chorus
and Orch of
the Accademia
Nazionale di
Santa Cecilia /
Sir Antonio Pappano
Warner Classics © ③
2564 61066-3
► **RICHARD
OSBORNE'S REVIEW
IS ON PAGE 46**

This would always have been an event, a major (in several senses) studio opera recording. But it's also a performance absolutely worthy of the attention, and a superb addition to the catalogue.



BRUCKNER
Symphony No 6
Frankfurt Radio SO /
Paavo Järvi
RCA Red Seal ©
88875 13126-2

Structure, emotion - Paavo Järvi proves once again in this superb Bruckner Sixth why he is deservedly one of the most recorded of today's conductors.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 50**



DVOŘÁK. LALO
Cello Concertos
Johannes Moser vc
Prague Philharmonia /
Jakub Hrůša
Pentatone © ②

PTC5186 488
Two concertos: one at the peak of the repertoire (in another excellent version); one lesser known but delivered with compelling advocacy. ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 52**



FUČÍK
'A Festival of Fučík'
Royal Scottish National
Orchestra / Neeme Järvi
Chandos © ② CHSA5158

Nicely crafted and highly enjoyable music, played with all the life and fizz it requires by Järvi and his Scottish-based colleagues.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 55**



VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
A Sea Symphony
Sols; Hallé Orchestra /
Sir Mark Elder
Hallé © CDHLL7542

Sir Mark Elder and his ever impressive Hallé Orchestra are completely versed, and immersed, in this music's sound world - a beautiful, majestic performance.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 63**



**JS BACH. HANDEL.
D SCARLATTI**
Gamba Sonatas
Stephen Isserlis,
Robin Michael vcs
Richard Egarr hpd

Hyperion © CDA68045
Two masters of their instruments combine to give vivid performances of works which transfer brilliantly to cello and harpsichord.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 70**



JS BACH
Goldberg Variations
Lars Vogt pf
Online © ODE1273-2

A wonderfully fresh, imaginative and warm-hearted journey through the *Goldbergs*, Lars Vogt's obvious enjoyment in exploring the work evident in every variation.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 84**



BEETHOVEN
'Lieder & Bagatellen'
Werner Güra ten
Christoph Berner fp
Harmonia Mundi ©
HMC90 2217

Berner's fortepiano - not dissimilar to that Beethoven would have known - sounds perfectly aligned to the miniatures, while offering delightful partnership to Güra.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 94**



**'THE SONG OF
THE STARS'**
Wells Cathedral
School Choralia /
Christopher Finch
Naxos © 8 573427

High praise for high voices are due to the girls of Wells Cathedral, one of the UK's leading champions of choral music and of girls voices within it.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 103**



TCHAIKOVSKY
The Queen of Spades
Sols; Bavarian Radio
Chorus and SO /
Mariss Jansons
BR-Klassik © ③ 900129

Superbly paced and played; Mariss Jansons provides his excellent cast of singers the support and vision needed for a memorable performance.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 115**



**DVD/BLU-RAY
ROSSINI**
Aureliano in Palmira
Sols; Chorus of the Teatro Comunale, Bologna;
Giuseppe Rossini SO / Will Crutchfield
ArtHaus Musik © ② DVD 109 073; © ③ 109 074
'The *Aureliano* to have' writes Richard Osborne of this new film of Rossini's opera.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 113**



A poignant and fascinating set of music from one of Europe's darkest eras.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 58**

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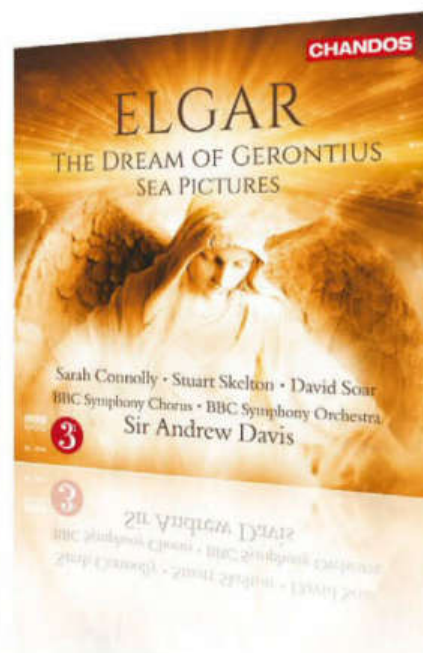
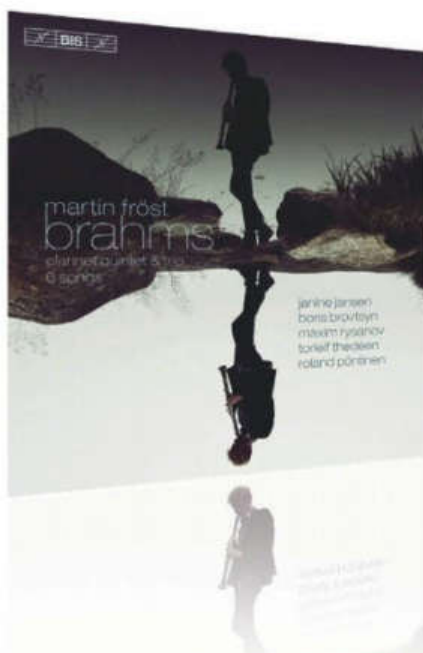
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The Gramophone Music Awards 2015

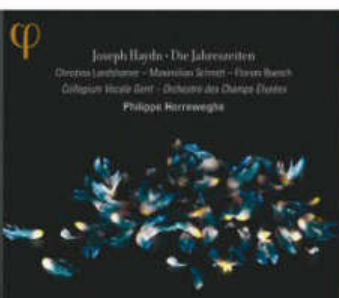
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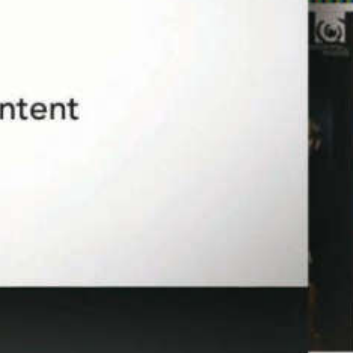
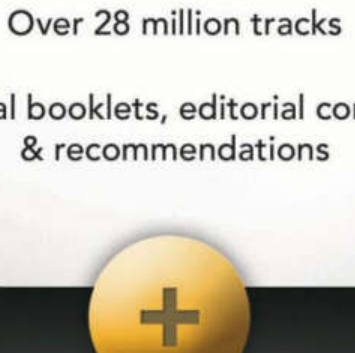
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FOR THE RECORD



Succeeding his lifelong friend: Chailly is to take over the Lucerne Festival Orchestra

Chailly is named Music Director of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra

Riccardo Chailly has been named as the new Music Director of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, beginning his five-year appointment at the start of the 2016 Summer Festival.

He succeeds Claudio Abbado, who had founded the ensemble in its modern version together with Executive and Artistic Director Michael Haefliger in 2003, and led it until his death in January 2014. Hand-picked by Abbado, the ensemble gathered each summer to perform at the Lucerne Festival. Their *Gramophone* Award-winning recording of Bruckner's Symphony No 9 was made just five months before Abbado's death and released on DG last summer.

In accepting the post, Chailly paid moving tribute to both Abbado's influence on the ensemble and on him as a conductor. 'To be responsible for this great artistic project initiated by Claudio Abbado is not only a privilege but also something that touches me emotionally,'

he said. 'Ever since I was 18, when he appointed me to be his assistant at La Scala, Abbado was my model and then my point of reference and lifelong friend.'

With the appointment, Riccardo Chailly further adds to his position as one of today's leading maestros. Chief Conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra since 2005, he also became Principal Conductor of La Scala in Milan in January.



A new hall for the Oslo Philharmonic

The Oslo Philharmonic has unveiled plans for a new concert hall in the Norwegian capital, to be built in partnership with property developers Anders Buchardt and Petter Stordalen. A worthy home has been the missing link in the orchestra's profile for decades, particularly as ensembles in Stavanger and Kristiansand, not to mention the

Norwegian Opera and Ballet, have moved into gleaming new premises in the past seven years.

Oslo's proposed new hall will be situated on the waterfront at Filipstad. The developers will privately finance the concert hall which, like the new hall that opened in Malmö, Sweden, in August, will be entwined with a hotel and congress facility.

Leeds Piano Competition names new Artistic Directors

The Leeds Piano Competition, one of the most prestigious competitions in its field, has announced its new Artistic Directors as pianist Paul Lewis and Adam Gatehouse, Senior Editor at BBC Radio 3 and founder of the influential BBC New Generation Artists scheme.

This year's competition will be the last one under the leadership of Dame Fanny Waterman, Chairman and Artistic Director, who founded the event back in 1961 and who is now retiring aged 95. First-prize winners of the competition, which takes place every three years, have included Murray Perahia, Radu Lupu, Artur Pizarro and Alessio Bax, while Sir András Schiff, Peter Donohoe and Dame Mitsuko Uchida have all been finalists.

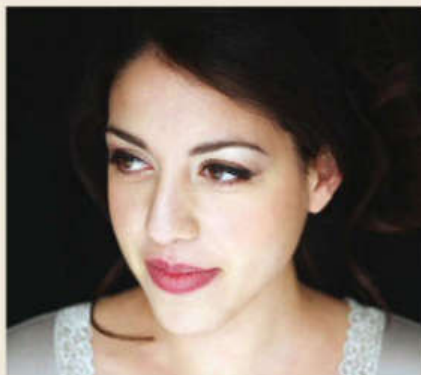
The new joint Artistic Directors will be responsible for selecting both the competitors and jury members, and will also, as a statement issued by the competition puts it, aim 'to develop the competition's connectivity with both the city of Leeds as well as its wider national and international audiences through an enriched programme of events and the use of digital technology.'

Pianist Beatrice Rana signs contract with Warner Classics

The pianist Beatrice Rana, who at the age of 20 won the Silver Medal at the Van Cliburn Competition in 2013, has signed an exclusive recording contract with Warner Classics.

Her Warner debut, alongside Sir Antonio Pappano and the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, includes Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No 1 and Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No 2 and will be released in the autumn.

Gramophone's Jed Distler greeted the recording that resulted from her Van Cliburn achievement in February last year, writing: 'Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit* starts from out of nowhere with a quicksilver, shimmering 'Ondine', then settles into a rock-steady, multi-level 'Le gibet'. 'Scarbo' ranges from gossamer filigree and utterly unsplintered rapid chord-playing to whiplash climaxes that cut to the quick yet retain resonance and



Beatrice Rana has signed for Warner Classics

definition. In short, Beatrice Rana possesses an old soul that belies her 20 years, and more than a touch of genius.'

Dima Slobodeniouk to head the Lahti Symphony Orchestra

The Lahti Symphony Orchestra has announced that its new Principal Conductor, succeeding Okko Kamu, will be Dima Slobodeniouk. Slobodeniouk is currently Music Director of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia and he will continue in that capacity alongside the new job in Lahti, which he assumes in autumn 2016. He will also become Artistic Director of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra's Sibelius Festival.

Of the announcement, Slobodeniouk said: 'I was lucky enough to be able to build and maintain a very open and fruitful relationship with Lahti Symphony Orchestra ever since I first conducted them in 2001, replacing Leif Segerstam. Today – this is a big honour and a challenge for me to create something new on the foundation of a great orchestra tradition in Lahti. I believe and hope that with our music-making we can influence people's lives regardless of their age or social background. The unique thing about classical music is the fact that it does not have to be verbalised or explained. That way it can reach and touch anyone.'

Slobodeniouk has made several recordings of music by Vagn Holmboe, Kalevi Aho, Osmo Tapio Räihälä and Sebastian Fagerlund for the BIS, Alba and Dacapo labels. His recording of Holmboe's concertos for violin and viola with the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra was an Editor's Choice in the July 2013 issue.

Viotti wins Nestlé and Salzburg Festival Young Conductors Award

The young Swiss conductor Lorenzo Viotti has won the 2015 Nestlé and Salzburg Festival Young Conductors Award. The award's jury, headed by conductor Dennis Russell Davies, selected Viotti after a contest that had seen a total of 65 entrants. The winner, who must be under the age of 35, receives a cash prize of €15,000 and will also have the opportunity to conduct the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra at a concert, in Salzburg's Felsenreitschule, in August next year.

Viotti said that it was 'an incredible joy and an honour to be at the Festival this week with this fantastic orchestra. I felt a special relationship with the Camerata Salzburg from the very first moment. That is why I did not feel any pressure during the competition. I am very proud, and I will not forget this experience.'

Viotti comes from a musical Italian-Swiss family – his father was the conductor Marcello Viotti. He studied in Lyon and later in Vienna where he performed as a percussionist with the Vienna Philharmonic. He made his conducting debut two years ago and has conducting dates this coming season with the Real Orquesta Sinfónica de Sevilla, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Tenerife, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León, the Orquesta Simfónica de Barcelona, the BBC Philharmonic and the Orchestre National de France. He will also conduct a new production of *La belle Hélène* by Jacques Offenbach at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris.



Winner Lorenzo Viotti with the Camerata Salzburg

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PODCASTS

Gramophone's Editor Martin Cullingford talks to conductor Christoph von Dohnányi (pictured) about his long and varied career in the recording studio, most notably with the Cleveland Orchestra.



BLOGS

Pianist Alessio Bax has written a compelling blog about the delicate art of making old warhorses of the repertoire sound freshly minted, and music director and harpsichordist Bridget Cunningham explains how she plans to explore a little-known aspect of Handel's creativity in a new series for Signum.

GRAMOPHONE TOP 10s

If you're after a recording recommendation for a particular work, then a *Gramophone* Top 10 list is the perfect place to visit. We have Top 10s dedicated to everything from the works of Rachmaninov, Beethoven and Mozart to genres such as symphonies, string quartets and British choral works. Each recommended recording is linked to its original *Gramophone* review, and we are frequently adding new Top 10 lists, so do keep your eyes peeled.

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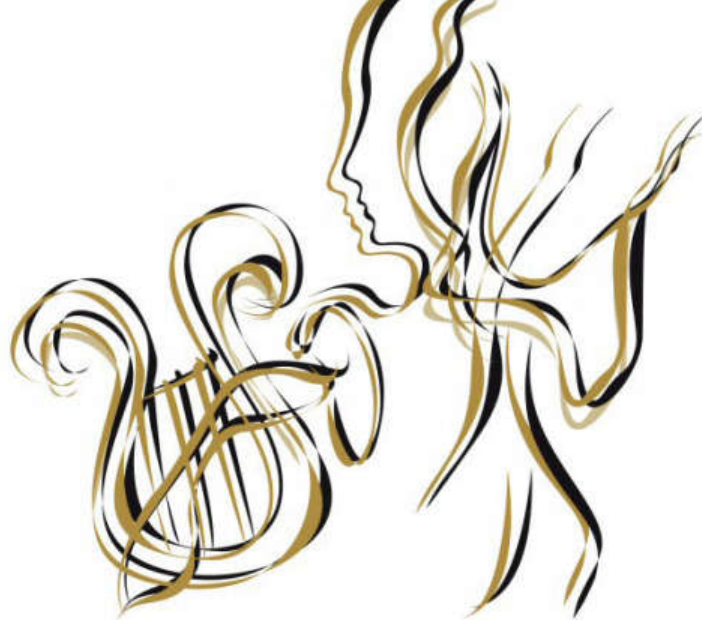
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GRAMOPHONE

CLASSICAL MUSIC AWARDS 2015

Honouring a huge range of recordings

While not perhaps one of the great vintages of recent years, it's certainly been one which has given a remarkable amount of pleasure over the past few months. As with last year, certain categories (notably Recital and Instrumental) have impressed with their strength and range, while Opera has almost completely migrated to DVD.

Once again, a list of recordings was drawn from a 12-month period (roughly June 1, 2014, to May 31, 2015 but based on when recordings were reviewed) and these were supplemented with our critics' additions. This longlist was sorted into 12 categories and circulated to 'specialist' critics (in other words, reviewers who tend to focus on a particular genre or style). Their votes reduced the longlist categories to six recordings in each. At this point any critic could opt into any category; some tended to stay within their own area of expertise, others took the opportunity to explore music outside their specialism. The recordings were then sent to the participating critics and a couple of months of concentrated listening ensued. Each critic awarded votes on a scale of 10 down to one (the number of votes allocated to each recording is given in the following pages), to produce the eventual 12 winners.

*Editor-in-Chief James Jolly
introduces this year's
Award-winners*

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To draw the Recording of the Year from those 12 category winners, we maintained the process that we've adopted for the past decade or so, assembling a jury from a panel of critics and ensuring that every one of them had a set of the winning discs to listen to. We then gathered in central London and, following a lengthy debate, we took a secret ballot – and thus our Recording of the Year

emerged. It always is one of the most enjoyable days in the year: an opportunity to talk about recordings in a gathering of experts who, for however many years they've been listening, still share a palpable passion for what is after all *Gramophone's* raison d'être.

In terms of winning labels, this year's represent probably the most widely spread list of recordings that we've ever had. It's no surprise that the Early Music and two Baroque categories are entirely made up of recordings from the independent sector, and it's interesting that the Concerto category has been taken by what one might call a refugee from a major label.

We also make a number of special awards and this year we field an impressive line-up: two master conductors of different generations, a talented young pianist and a label devoted to great sound are all honoured this year. Enjoy listening to our winners!



We're delighted that Qobuz, the music streaming and download service, is sponsoring our Recording of the Year. This is a prize which has, in the past, honoured many of

today's most exciting and impressive musicians, and 2015 is no exception. To celebrate the Awards, Qobuz is also offering a **20 per cent discount** on this year's Recording of the Year,

available to download at 24-bit studio master quality. Simply visit **qobuz.com/recordoftheyear2015** and use the code AWARDS2015 (discount ends on September 30).

RECORDING OF THE YEAR



Orchestral

WINNER Bruckner Symphony No 9

'The Lucerne Festival Orchestra was a unique assemblage of musicians to whom Abbado entrusted his thoughts and feelings about Bruckner's anxious song of farewell'

Claudio Abbado's 2013 Lucerne Festival concert was not intended to be his last, but the programme – Schubert's *Unfinished* Symphony and Bruckner's own unfinished Ninth – spoke of Last Things. And so in the end it proved.

Abbado first came to Bruckner's music during his apprentice years in Vienna. Aged 26 he recorded the First Symphony with the Vienna Philharmonic and two decades later made a memorable recording of the Fourth with the same orchestra. His Bruckner could on occasion seem merely dutiful. I recall a somewhat faceless account of the Seventh Symphony at the 1984 Salzburg Festival and a live 1996 recording of the Ninth both with the Vienna Philharmonic. This Lucerne Bruckner Ninth is something other.

In his distinguished booklet essay, the Italian writer and broadcaster Oreste Bossini speaks of the performance's polyphonic transparency and the naturalness and fluidity of its pacing. Even in the

Bruckner Symphony No 9
Lucerne Festival Orchestra / Claudio Abbado
DG © 479 3441 (9/14)
Producer
Georg Obermayer
Engineers **Urs Dürr, Toine Mertens**
96 votes



most expressive parts of the *Adagio*, he writes, one has the sense that the music is always in motion, 'never leaning towards pointless self-pity'. I cannot recall a finer account of this movement, where conductors can so easily lose their way, and players too in those passages of trackless wandering where they find themselves in foreign keys and unusual registers.

Abbado's reading of the vast first movement is in time but not entirely of it. On occasion the pulse hangs by a thread. Yet it is a thread that never breaks, like a life that has peaks yet to climb before it makes its quietus.

All performances are unrepeatable but this is unrepeatable in a particular sense. The Lucerne Festival Orchestra was a unique assemblage of musicians to whom Abbado entrusted his thoughts and feelings about Bruckner's anxious song of farewell. They in turn repaid him with playing of rare concentration and understanding.

Richard Osborne

THE INTERVIEW

MICHAEL HAEFLIGER, Director of the Lucerne Festival

I met Claudio for dinner in the year 2000 and he proposed the idea of re-establishing the Lucerne Festival Orchestra. He said that he'd once conducted the Festspielorchester – which was what it was called then – in Lucerne and there were musicians like Heinz Holliger and Aurèle Nicolet present, and he so appreciated working with such distinguished players in the context of an orchestral collaboration. I think that remained in his consciousness, as did the fact that the Festival Orchestra was originally founded by Arturo Toscanini and Ernest Ansermet back in 1938. That had a strong influence on him – he perhaps saw himself as resurrecting this project in Lucerne in the last stage of his career. So he sought out some of the greatest players from all over Europe – many were former partners of his in orchestras he'd worked with.

He had a dream of creating an orchestra with players who were very close to him and in complete harmony with him – and that is what he achieved. He is perhaps the first conductor to create an orchestra of the highest level with people he liked to work with and had complete trust in, not just the people who were chosen by auditions and selections. He felt he could really make music with them.



RUNNERS-UP



Vaughan Williams

Symphony No. 3,
'Pastoral Symphony'.

Tallis Fantasia, etc

**Hallé Orchestra /
Sir Mark Elder**

Hallé CDHLL7540 (2/15)

81 votes



Sibelius Symphonies

**BBC Philharmonic /
John Storgårds**

Chandos
CHAN10809 (6/14)

66 votes

This last concert was an extraordinary experience because it could be felt that this might be his last performance. Of course, we didn't know how poor his health really was but it was apparent that he conducted throughout with a huge effort. It was a phenomenal performance, and a very touching one.



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LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

WINNER Bernard Haitink

*Sir Andrés Schiff pays tribute
to a great musician and
a valued colleague*

Bernard is unique because, of all the conductors I know, he has the least ego. It's like a breath of fresh air! The way he loves music, and respects and reveres the great composers, and how he sees his role, is exactly as it should be: as a medium between the composer and the players and the listeners. He's not driven by the huge overblown egos of certain other conductors!

He's very easy and straightforward to work with. As with the instrumentalists I play chamber music with, the less you need to talk, I think, the better. And with Bernard you almost never have to talk. We know each other so well that there's not this usual brief meeting before a rehearsal where one goes through the tempi – we just know that we will agree on it, so we just go in immediately to rehearse with the orchestra. Bernard is, I think, modest to a fault; he has such a fantastic conducting technique that he believes firmly that it's totally unnecessary to say anything to the orchestra, so if something goes wrong he thinks it's probably his fault...but it isn't! He's so modest and that's why all orchestras respect him.

I find it is especially harmonious when we work with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe – I think that's what he enjoys the most. Even though the

orchestra is no longer a young one the spirit is very young and I find that he gets the best results with them.

He is very much a role model and I've always watched him and consulted

him. If I had to ask for a conducting teacher I'd choose Bernard but, like most great conductors, he would claim that conducting is something that can't be taught. And yet it *can* be: I've seen Bernard in masterclasses and he's a magnificent teacher.

He never stops – he has, for example, really rethought the Beethoven symphonies (drastically I think if you compare the latest version with the earliest). There are big changes and like many of us, he did learn something from period-performance style. And Bernard is still adding new pieces to his repertoire. I'm still amazed that he conducts certain contemporary works for the first time. When he started with the Concertgebouw, he was – let's not forget – a very young and, as he told me, very inexperienced conductor. Today we see a lot of orchestras appointing very young music directors but Bernard was very young when he started and this is his Indian Summer. It is wonderful that there is this freshness, but also a sense of calmness and tranquillity, about his music-making.



PHOTOGRAPHY: TODD ROSENBERG, CLIVE BARDA

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

BERNARD HAITINK

Had Bernard Haitink not conducted another note after stepping down as Principal Conductor of Amsterdam's Concertgebouw Orchestra in 1988, his position as one of the world's great conductors would have been secure enough. But he went on to add two more 'panels' to a career that has neatly fallen into a kind of triptych: an operatic period and then a final, glorious Indian Summer that shows no sign of drawing to a close.



Haitink was born in Amsterdam where he studied the violin and conducting at the Conservatory; he made his conducting debut with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic in 1954 and the following year, stepping in for an indisposed Carlo Maria Giulini, first conducted the Concertgebouw Orchestra. In 1959, following the death of Eduard van Beinum, he was named First Conductor of the orchestra: he was 30. Two years later he shared the title of Principal Conductor with Eugen Jochum and then, in 1963, became the Orchestra's sole Musical Director. For the next 25 years he would develop one of those celebrated conductor-orchestra relationships that was, thankfully, enshrined on disc, largely by Philips. At the heart of a large and wide-ranging repertoire sat the great central works of the Austro-German literature.

Symphonies by Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann and Tchaikovsky followed, and Haitink also proved a superb concerto partner (as András Schiff says in his tribute opposite). He conducted the Beethoven piano concertos for Claudio Arrau, Murray Perahia (taking a *Gramophone* Concerto Award in 1986 for Nos 3 and 4) and Schiff (with the Staatskapelle Dresden). When Haitink embraced French repertoire the results were, unsurprisingly, ravishing and a recording that included Debussy's *Jeux* and *Nocturnes* brought him two *Gramophone* Awards – Orchestral and Engineering – in 1980. As Principal Conductor of the London Philharmonic from 1967 to '79, he gave us Shostakovich symphonies and also proved himself a fine advocate of British composers such as Elgar, Walton and Vaughan Williams.

The late 1970s saw his first major engagement with opera: first at Glyndebourne (1978-88) and then, after Amsterdam, at the ROH (1987-2002) where his repertoire ranged from Mozart to Wagner. His 1983 *Don Giovanni*, with Thomas Allen in the title-role and based on performances at Glyndebourne, took the 1985 *Gramophone* Opera Award. Also for EMI, he recorded Wagner and Strauss.

The third period saw him taking on two major positions: as Chief Conductor of the Staatskapelle Dresden (2002-4) and Principal Conductor of the Chicago

Symphony (2006-10). Since then he has developed close relationships with the London Symphony Orchestra and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe.

As the Grand Old Man of the conducting world, his love for the music remains palpable and we're delighted to honour him with this special award. **James Jolly**

HAITINK'S GRAMOPHONE AWARDS



Debussy

Orchestral works

Concertgebouw Orchestra
Decca Duo (M) ② 438 7422
(3/81^R)



Mozart Don Giovanni

Soloists; London Philharmonic Orchestra

EMI (B) ③ 358 638-2
(7/84^R)



Beethoven Piano Concertos

Murray Perahia pf

Concertgebouw Orchestra
Sony Classical (S) ③
88697 10290-2 (3/86^R)

NAXOS

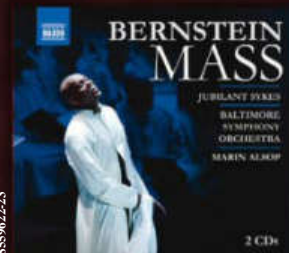
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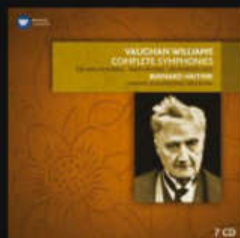
Bernard Haitink

Orchestras and record labels pay tribute to the great Dutch conductor
as he receives *Gramophone's* Lifetime Achievement Award



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Warner Classics sends warmest congratulations to Bernard Haitink on his *Gramophone* Lifetime Achievement Award. We are proud to be the custodian of the great recordings he made for EMI, Teldec and Erato – from Britten to Janáček, Vaughan Williams to Wagner, his legacy forms a cornerstone of our catalogue.



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DECCA

This 36-CD set, conducted by Bernard Haitink, an exclusive Philips artist for over 30 years, presents six complete symphonic cycles of Beethoven, Brahms, Bruckner, Mahler, Schumann and Tchaikovsky with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, voted the 'Greatest Orchestra in the World' by *Gramophone*. This is the orchestra with whom Haitink made his debut in November 1956, nearly 59 years ago, and with whom his lifetime career is most obviously associated. Congratulations on this great honour!



BR KLASSIK

The relationship between Bernard Haitink and the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks goes back over 50 years to 1958. Since then, we have participated in innumerable projects and unforgettable performances together. A recent milestone was the recording of Mahler's Symphony No 9 which gained the ECHO award in 2013. Our congratulations on the new honour you have received!

PROMOTION



GRAMOPHONE

CLASSICAL MUSIC AWARDS 2015





ARTIST OF THE YEAR

WINNER Paavo Järvi

'His mastery of the recording process makes him a much sought-after conductor'

There's a certain inevitability that if you're the son of one of the most prolific conductors of our time, a certain familial competitiveness might make you want to cap dad's record (*le mot juste* in this instance!). Neeme Järvi's discography is vast and that of his son, Paavo, is fast approaching it in size and breadth.

Paavo Järvi – who saw off strong competition from the other nine nominated musicians in this public vote – has established himself as one of the most versatile and inspiring conductors of his generation, and with a remarkably broad repertoire. Now in his fifth season as Music Director of the Orchestre de Paris, as Music Director of the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen since 2004, as Conductor Laureate of the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, as Music Director Laureate of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and as Chief Conductor-designate of the NHK Symphony Orchestra (which he takes over next season), Järvi's music-making has a truly international dimension, and his guest-conducting schedule takes him around the globe many times each year.

What makes Järvi one of the most interesting conductors of today is the freshness of his music-making and his unhackneyed approach to central repertoire, an approach that has earned

him a loyal following. Take his Beethoven series with the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, which concluded this year with a fine disc of the overtures; as Peter Quantrell commented in the January issue,

'Paavo Järvi is relentlessly alive to the setting of the play overtures, in which the dominant mode of expression is terse and tense and loud to match their subjects of embodied heroism and personal failure.'

As Järvi explained to Geoffrey Norris in our May issue, he tends not to carry the same repertoire from orchestra to orchestra, but rather keeps distinct 'pairings': and it's been a principle that has worked well. In Frankfurt, he has recorded core Austro-Germanic repertoire that includes Bruckner symphonies – 'Järvi offers an extremely beautiful performance, responsively played and, most crucially, sensitive to key transitions' was Rob Cowan's verdict on No 7 (9/09), and No 6 is named an Editor's Choice this month (see page 50) – as well as Mahler, but he has also recorded music by fellow Estonian Erkki Sven Tüür (a composer he has enjoyed a long musical relationship with).

With the Orchestre de Paris he has recorded French music as part of the gala opening concerts at the Philharmonie de Paris. In his review in May, Mike Ashman had this to say: 'The layering of the



scores being performed – most relevant here in [Ravel's] *Daphnis Suite* and the new Escaich Concerto – seems in all cases clear; sections of the orchestra do not overrun and “smudge” each other. Performance-wise, Paavo Järvi, now in his penultimate year with the orchestra, has their attention and fluency throughout this repertoire. The *Symphonie fantastique* is in almost every way a superior performance [to that of the orchestra's recorded debut].’ A Dutilleux recording also caught our ear in March (‘performed with relish by Järvi and an Orchestre de Paris on top form’ wrote Arnold Whittall) and this month Järvi and the Orchestre de Paris give us Rachmaninov (welcomed by David Gutman on page 58).

With the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra – again a good, if not uncontroversial example of matching performers to repertoire – Järvi made a fine recording of Shostakovich cantatas which led David Fanning to comment, in July, that ‘there are certainly no forces I would rather listen to in this repertoire than the ones assembled for this acoustically resplendent disc’ and he threw down the gauntlet to Järvi's record company, Erato: ‘Is it too much to hope for a follow-up, containing the remaining cantatas and the unaccompanied choruses *Loyalty*, composed for Lenin's centenary and long since unobtainable on CD?’ And a fine Arvo Pärt collection (reissued) from Estonia offers yet another aspect of Järvi's multi-faceted musical sympathies.

For Pentatone, Järvi made a fine recording of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony, part of a series that he's been particularly pleased to contribute to; his godfather Paavo Berglund recorded No 8 and his close friend, the late Yakov Kreizberg, gave us Nos 5 and 9. Of No 7, Edward Seckerson wrote in May: ‘If a conductor and orchestra can get the opening right (and it's amazing how many sacrifice momentum to grandeur) then the chances are that the rest of this momentous piece will fall into place. Paavo Järvi and the Russian National Orchestra do just that.’

KEY RECORDINGS



Bruckner Symphony No 6
Frankfurt RSO
RCA Red Seal
Ⓢ 88875 13126-2
(A/15)



Mozart. Vieuxtemps
Violin Concertos
Hilary Hahn; Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie
DG Ⓢ 479 3956GH (4/15)



Shostakovich
Symphony No 7
Russian National Orchestra
Pentatone
Ⓢ PTC518 6511 (5/15)



Shostakovich Cantatas
Soloists; Estonian Concert Choir and National SO
Erato
Ⓢ 2564 61666-6 (7/15)



Tüür Symphony No 7.
Piano Concerto
Frankfurt RSO
ECM New Series
Ⓢ 481 0675 (5/14)



‘Live from the Philharmonie’ Berlioz,
Ravel, Varèse and Escaich
Orchestre de Paris
Orchestre de Paris ➔ (5/15)

As a concerto partner, Järvi is a fine collaborator, as a recent disc of Vieuxtemps and Mozart violin concertos with Hilary Hahn proved – ‘Always finely balanced and expressive, and, in the Vieuxtemps, providing the necessary elements of drama and emotional colour,’ said Duncan Druce (4/15). It bodes well for the forthcoming recording, from Frankfurt, of Beethoven's Triple Concerto with Gil Shaham, Anne Gastinel and Nicholas Angelich.

Järvi's inquisitive approach to music-making means he always has something to say. His mastery of the recording process makes him a much sought-after conductor, and his appetite for exploring the repertoire shows little sign of waning.

James Jolly

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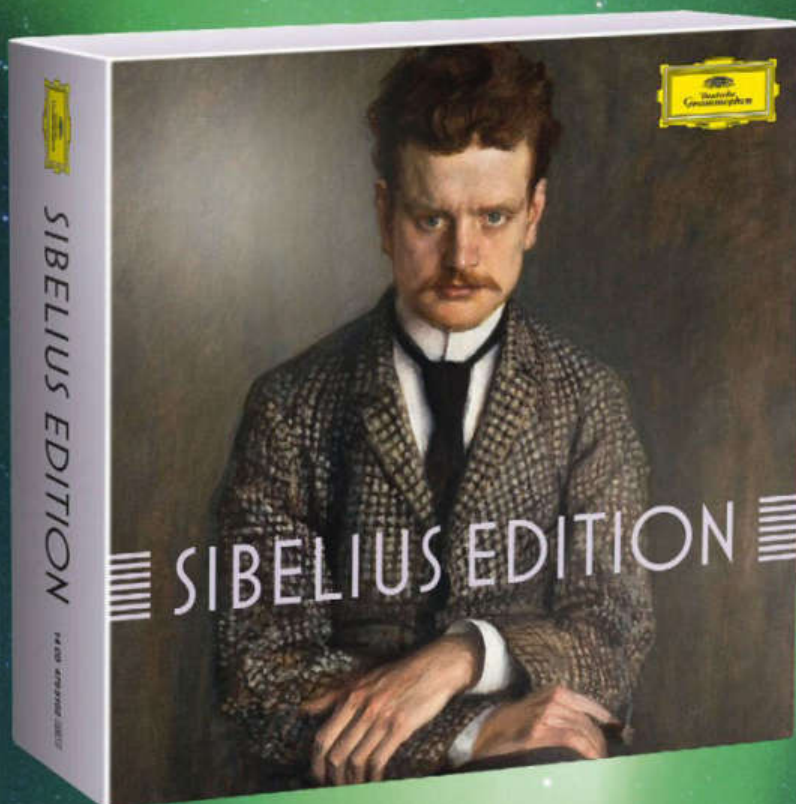
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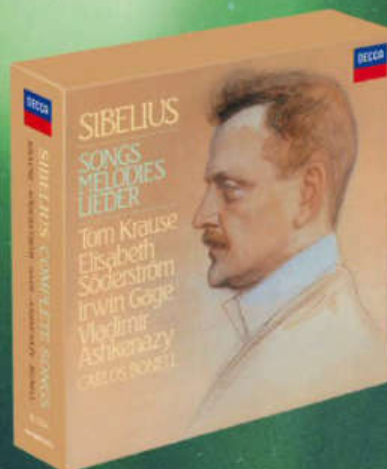
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YOUNG ARTIST OF THE YEAR

WINNER Joseph Moog

Take a look at Joseph Moog's last four recordings, the result of his continuing and fruitful relationship with the Onyx label: Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto coupled with Anton Rubinstein's Fourth; Tchaikovsky's G major Sonata and Xaver Scharwenka's Piano Sonata No 2; a disc of Scarlatti transcriptions; and, most recently, Grieg's Piano Concerto paired with Moszkowski's ('From Moog everything sparks and thunders. A virtuoso to the manner born, notes stream from his fingers like cascading diamonds,' was Bryce Morrison's verdict last month).

What do they have in common – apart from each having garnered near-universal glowing reviews? It is, of course, the familiar coupled with the unexpected, masterly accounts of standard repertoire matched with a no-less-compelling advocacy of unfashionable and/or neglected works of the past. Courageous, you might say, for a young artist yet to establish himself internationally. Adventurous, certainly, and imaginative too, none of which would matter a jot without the musicality and impeccable

*A Young Artist of the Year
with all the qualities of the
old artists of yesteryear'*

RECOMMENDED RECORDING



Grieg. Moszkowski
Piano Concertos
Deutsche Radio Philh /
Nicholas Milton
Onyx © ONYX4144 (9/15)

Sponsored by



technique to bring it off. For early proof that he has these qualities in abundance listen to Moog's 2006 recording (for the Claves label) of Liszt's *Hexameron* where Cziffra-like reflexes, allied to a keen ear for subtle colours and inner voicing, put him on a par with the best of his contemporaries.

Born in Ludwigshafen am Rhein, Germany, in 1987, he gravitated to the piano at the age of three. He was improvising at six and played his first

public recital at eight. His own two-movement Sonata Op 5 appeared on his very first recording (on the Animato label) in 2004. It is Moog's bold programming and spirit of enquiry that sets him apart, a curiosity fuelled when he was young by a family friend's gift of a library of rare scores. 'It gave me another view of piano music,' he says. 'There was never the typical separation between "known" good music and less known, less popular music.'

Moog, backed by his label, bucks the trend and ploughs his own furrow with taste and discernment – a Young Artist of the Year with all the qualities of the old artists of yesteryear. **Jeremy Nicholas**

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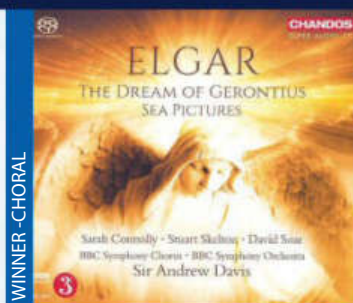
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LABEL OF THE YEAR



In the 25 years since Channel Classics was founded by its devoted Managing Director Jared Sacks (right), the recording landscape has changed radically. Where once majors reigned supreme and indies carved a niche in terms of repertoire, artists or market, now the distinction between the two, so far as collectors are concerned, is not so clear-cut. The most discerning among the indies – and this year's winner is certainly one – nurture a hand-picked roster of brilliant artists, just as majors have always done, giving them the support to explore the repertoire they most excel in, and allowing them to take risks. Reaping the rewards of this kind of approach are, fundamentally, the listeners.

Foremost stars among those on Channel Classics' roster include British violinist Rachel Podger and Hungarian conductor Iván Fischer. Podger's every disc reveals an artist who effortlessly combines intelligent attention to detail, virtuosic brilliance and a thrilling joy in music-making. This year saw her recording of Vivaldi's *L'estro armonico* shortlisted in the Baroque Instrumental category, having already claimed Recording of the Month in April 2015; in his review, Lindsay Kemp wrote: 'There is probably no more inspirational musician working today.'

Fischer, meanwhile, has steadily built his Budapest Festival Orchestra into one of today's most impressive ensembles, regularly releasing recordings which stand proudly in the company of orchestras of much older vintage and fame. His Mahler Ninth was an Editor's Choice in our June issue, and a closing remark by critic David Gutman – 'The Channel Classics issue (with surround-sound option) is in a very special class, a sonic dazzler' – gets us to the heart of one of the label's greatest strengths: Sacks's audiophile commitment

to sound quality, and to exploiting the possibilities of new and improved recording formats to lend the most vivid listening experience he can to his carefully prepared, painstakingly recorded releases. To Podger and Fischer can be added a host of less- well-known artists – Rosanne Philippiens and the Ragazze Quartet are two such who have fared well in these pages – while a completely unexpected and delightful disc of works for trumpet and trombone called 'Tintomara' (an Editor's Choice in June) showed off Channel Classics at its imaginative best. All in all, it's been a very fine year to crown an impressive quarter-century for this year's *Gramophone* Label of the Year.


WINNER Channel Classics

Gramophone's Editor Martin Cullingford explains our choice of label for 2015

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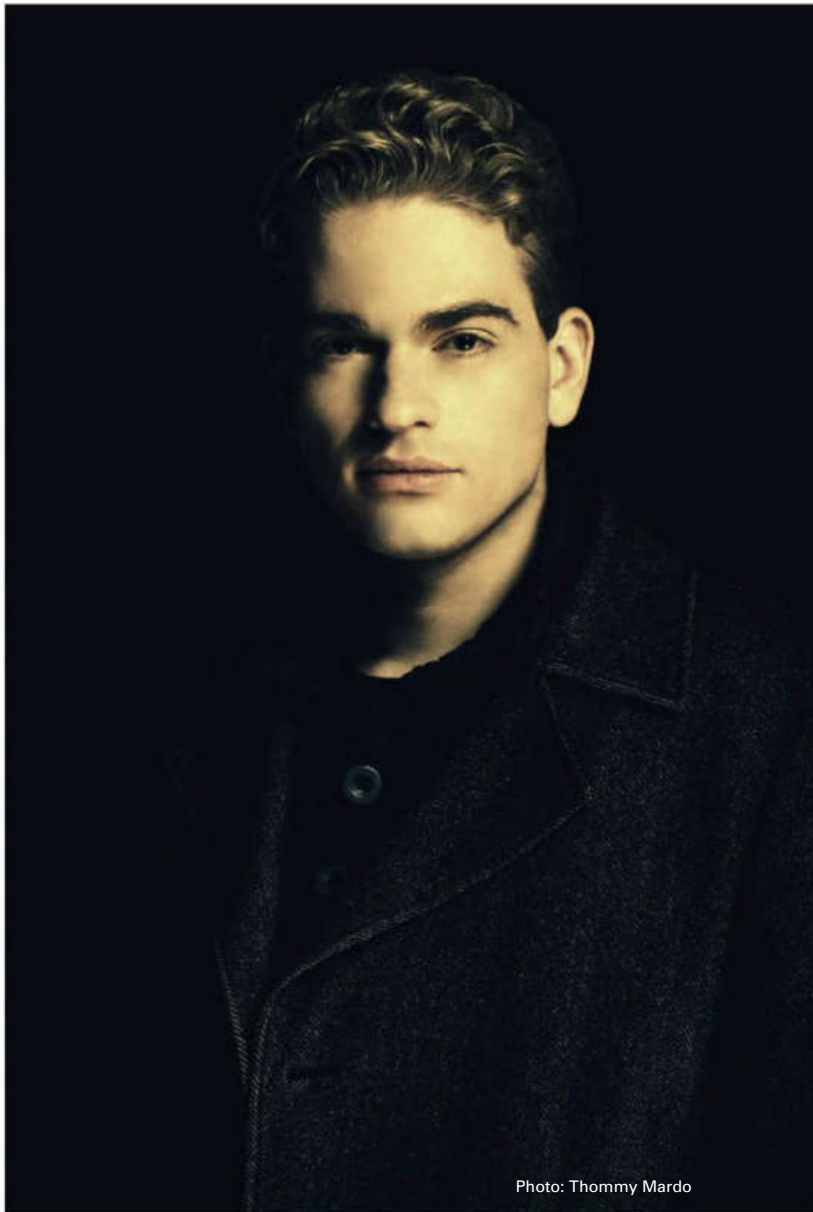


Photo: Tommy Mardo

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EARLY MUSIC

WINNER 'The Spy's Choirbook'

Self-effacing direction from Skinner in an Alamire project close to his heart

The source by itself is a BBC4 documentary just waiting to be made. An illuminated manuscript of superb music, compiled by a composer, copyist and secret agent, Petrus Alamire, who dripped Catholic perfidy into the ear of King Henry VIII before becoming turncoat for the French. Repenting of his treachery, he made a gift of the choirbook in a final, failed attempt to curry favour with the king.

So much for the concept, but its realisation is no less compelling. Singers such as Grace Davidson, Simon Wall, Eamonn Dougan and Greg Skidmore are well known for their work across the English early music scene. They are brought together here under the self-effacing direction of David Skinner, who has always been a scholar-performer in that order. The project to record 'The Spy's Choirbook' evidently means much to him, enough that he named the vocal ensemble (whose recording of Thomas Tomkins was our CD of the Month in February 2008) after Alamire himself.

Comparisons are hardly possible thanks to the rarity of many works presented here – and one hopes that, if nothing else, the album encourages other ensembles to follow Alamire's lead, put the manuscript on the map and investigate some of its composers who, like Johannes Ghiselin, deserve



'The Spy's Choirbook'

Petrus Alamire & the Court of Henry VIII

Alamire; English Cornett & Sackbut Ensemble / David Skinner

Obsidian

Ⓢ Ⓢ CCLCD712 (1/15)

Producer Nigel Short

Engineer Jim Gross

80 votes

whole albums in their own right – but some familiar masterpieces of the genre are shown in the light of a new context. The *Absalon fili mi* attributed to Josquin is a model of modern consort singing: discreet but not decorous, expressive but not exaggerated, full of a spirit of generosity as the singers listen and know when to get out of each other's way. It marks the end of a superb sequence of motets dedicated to the text *Dulces exuviae*, among which poor old Anonymous scores at least as highly as Agricola, Josquin, Mouton and indeed Ghiselin in extracting a full measure of dignified pain from Dido's farewell in *The Aeneid*. Is Alamire making a poignant connection with Catherine of Aragon? Is a BBC4 producer listening?

Peter Quantrill

RUNNERS-UP



'Au Saint nau'

**Ensemble Clément Janequin;
Trio Musica Humana / Dominique Visse**

Alpha Ⓢ ALPHA198 (2/15)

79 votes



'Adoramus te'

**Clare Wilkinson;
The Rose Consort of Viols**

Deux-Elles Ⓢ DXL1155 (A/14)

77 votes

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BAROQUE INSTRUMENTAL

WINNER **Bach** Cello Suites

Illuminating interpretations, both natural and spontaneous, from David Watkin

The two runners-up in the category are outstanding: Mahan Esfahani's Rameau discs take us from the comparatively conventional early suites to the fanciful, theatrical style of the collections published around 1730. And the performances of Vivaldi's Op 3 concertos by Rachel Podger and colleagues capture all the inventive freshness running through this ground-breaking opus. It's lovely string-playing, capturing all the music's liveliness and drama, whilst not neglecting its many moments of lyrical beauty.

But from a very strong shortlist, Watkin's account of the Bach Cello Suites makes the most outstanding impression. There have, of course, been many wonderful sets in the past, beginning with Pablo Casals and including several fine versions with Baroque cello, but Watkin's interpretations are as illuminating as any. One can be certain that he has thought long and hard about tempo, the style of each dance, and details of phrasing, yet the result is so natural and spontaneous that we can imagine him having just picked up his cello to play for pleasure. I particularly liked the joyful energy of the First Suite's Prelude and the graceful



JS Bach Cello Suites
David Watkin vc

Resonus
Ⓜ Ⓜ RES10147 (6/15)
Producer & Engineer
Adam Binks
139 votes

poise of its minuets, the fantastical quality of the free passages in the Fourth Suite's Prelude, the wonderfully dark sonorities in the Fifth Suite, and the rainbow colours of the five-string cello in the Prelude to the Sixth Suite. One thing that impresses me throughout is the elegant, entirely convincing way Watkin handles the polyphonic music; the ambitious chords in a movement such as the Sarabande of the Sixth Suite can appear strenuous, but not here – one's attention is drawn only to the beautiful melodic lines and the mood of serenity.

Duncan Druce

RUNNERS-UP



Vivaldi L'estro armonico, Op 3
Brecon Baroque / Rachel Podger vn
Channel Classics Ⓟ Ⓜ
CCSSA36515 (4/15)
129 votes



Rameau Pièces de clavecin
Mahan Esfahani hpd
Hyperion
Ⓟ Ⓜ CDA68071/2 (12/14)
104 votes



BAROQUE VOCAL

WINNER Monteverdi *Vespi solenni per la Festa di San Marco*

Alessandrini conducts a compelling performance of lesser-known Monteverdi

As David Vickers reminded us in his review of Rinaldo Alessandrini's *Vespi solenni per la Festa di San Marco*, we shouldn't be fooled into thinking this is yet another recording of Monteverdi's great sacred masterpiece, the Vespers of 1610. Instead, after the instantly recognisable responsory that does come from the 1610 work, Alessandrini embarks on an exploration of the collection *Selva morale e spirituale*, the 'moral and spiritual forest' published three decades later and consisting of works written during the Cremonese composer's employment in Venice.

As far as Monteverdi is concerned, there can't be many musicians more steeped in his sumptuous style than Alessandrini, having previously given us on disc the *Vespers*, *Orfeo* and most of the madrigals. This, though, is the sort of hypothetical historical reconstruction that was popular in the 1990s; but it's a worthwhile way in which to present the *Selva*, which is in reality a collection of various and disparate pieces rather than a through-considered liturgical cycle in its own right. A supposed liturgy for St Mark has been recreated, culminating in a grand *Magnificat* in a new edition by Alessandrini, who has reimagined two missing vocal parts.



Monteverdi *Vespi solenni per la Festa di San Marco*

Concerto Italiano / Rinaldo Alessandrini

Naïve

Ⓢ + DVD OP30557 (A/14)

Producer

Jean-Pierre Loisl

Engineer

Laure Casenave-Péré

102 votes

Single voices and an orchestra coloured by the timbre of cornetts and Baroque trombones glow within the 16th-century surroundings of Mantua's Basilica Santa Barbara. The music seems perfectly matched to its location, given the Italian Baroque's love of the luxurious and extravagant. It makes one wonder whether there can have been many more ear-tickling eras in which to have been a church-goer – and in a performance as vital and compelling as this, rising to that gloriously climactic *Magnificat*, whether a better case has ever been made for Monteverdi's delicious sacred forest.

David Threasher

RUNNERS-UP



Bach Mass in B minor

Soloists; Arcangelo / Jonathan Cohen

Hyperion

Ⓢ 2 CDA68051/2 (11/14)

84 votes



Charpentier La descente d'Orphée

aux enfers **Soloists; Boston Early Music**

Festival Vocal and Chamber Ensembles /

Paul O'Dette, Stephen Stubbs

CPO Ⓢ CPO777 876-2 (9/14) **75 votes**

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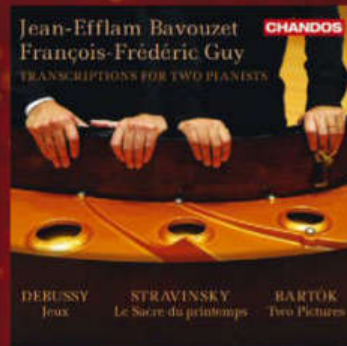
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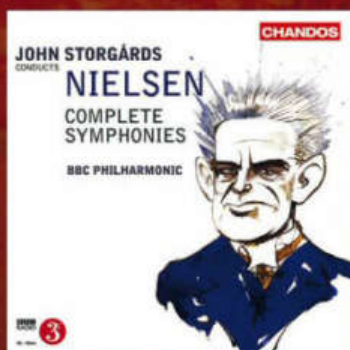


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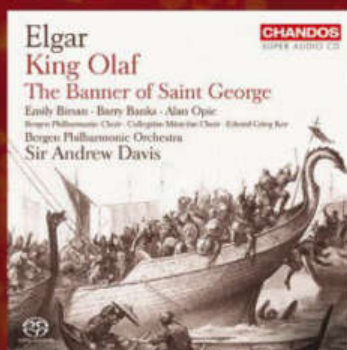


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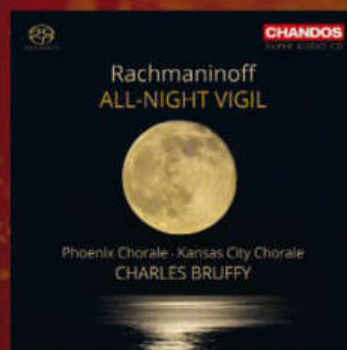
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EDITOR'S CHOICE
Gramophone



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DAVID SKINNER

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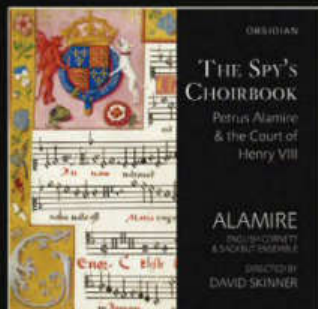
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INSTRUMENTAL

WINNER **Bach** English Suites Nos 1, 3 & 5

Anderszewski's combination of insight and imagination draws us in at every turn

It is traditional for reviewers who have enjoyed 'part-sets' such as this to express a wish for further recordings to complete the canon.

Harriet Smith was right, however, in her purring review of these three works from the six that make up Bach's *English Suites* to urge us simply to 'cherish this one'. When playing and musicianship is of as high an order as this, and when the carefully ordered selection of Suites Nos 3, 1 and 5 reveals so much thought in the preparation, pushing for more would just be greedy.

Let's be thankful, then, for a disc which in 67 minutes offers enough great piano-playing for a lifetime of pleasure, stimulation and illumination. It goes without saying that Piotr Anderszewski's control of dynamic, articulation, textural clarity and voicing is total, but what makes his Bach so special is his combination of insight and imagination. Some of the ornaments that tumble so easily from under his fingers are Bach's, others are his, but everywhere the music glints with subtly emphasised lines you'd never noticed before, dances with lightfooted athletic grace, or leads us helpless through profound and assured emotional trajectories; the sarabandes in particular draw us in with quiet playing of breathtaking daring. Every



Bach English Suites
Nos 1, 3 & 5

Piotr Anderszewski *pf*

Warner Classics (P)

2564 62193-9 (2/15)

Producers & Engineers

Andrzej Nagórko,

Alvaro Palma

154 votes

moment is compelling, many are mesmerising, and some will reach right to your heart. Here is an artist operating at an exalted level of discourse – with Bach, with his instrument, with us.

Despite pressing competition from a beautifully chosen album of dance-influenced pieces by Benjamin Grosvenor (a supremely gifted young pianist from whom more great things in the future seem a certainty) and a rare live recital by Grigory Sokolov including a typically inimitable account of the Chopin Preludes, this disc was a healthy winner. Name your favourite Bach pianists from the past 100 years if you like – Piotr Anderszewski is of their company. **Lindsay Kemp**

RUNNERS-UP



'The Salzburg Recital'

Grigory Sokolov *pf*

DG

(M) (C) 479 4342GH2 (2/15)

150 votes



'Dances'

Benjamin Grosvenor *pf*

Decca

(P) 478 5334DH (9/14)

150 votes

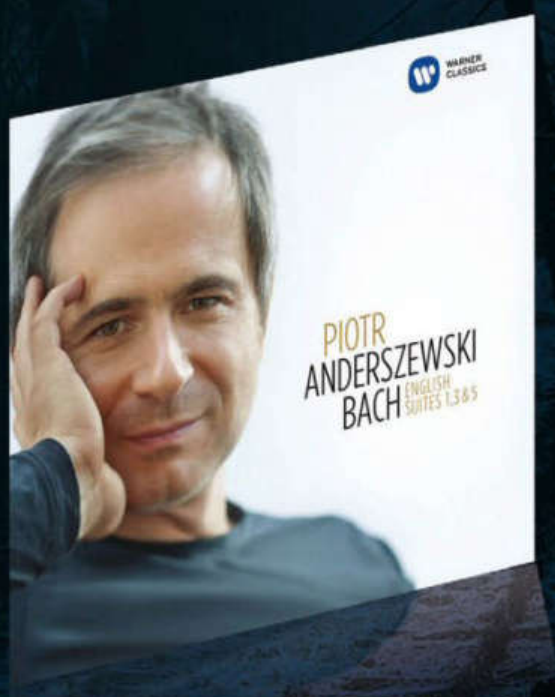




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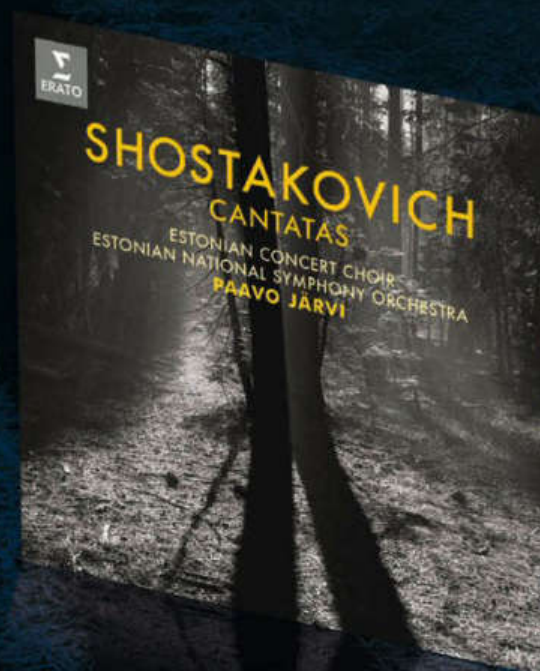


INSTRUMENTAL ALBUM OF THE YEAR

“This collection of the odd-numbered ones is well worth the wait, and perfectly conveys the strengths and special qualities of his Bach playing”
The Guardian

ARTIST OF THE YEAR

“Shostakovich completists will want this coupling ... Järvi's Estonians perform with fervour and the Razin makes the issue worthwhile”
The Sunday Times



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CHAMBER

WINNER **Smetana** String Quartets Nos 1 & 2

Edge-of-seat spontaneity and captivating ardour from the Pavel Haas Quartet

Tough competition in this category, not least from Swedish clarinettist Martin Fröst and distinguished colleagues in hugely eloquent accounts of the Brahms Quintet and Trio, as well as the Doric Quartet's marvellously invigorating exploration of Haydn's Op 20 set. In the end, though, it's the superlative Pavel Haas Quartet who take the palm with this excitingly no-holds-barred yet sublimely assured coupling of Smetana's two string quartets. The performance of the autobiographical No 1 is remarkable for its recreative daring, edge-of-seat spontaneity and captivating lyrical ardour. What reserves of tumbling poetry and devastating emotional candour these artists bring to the gorgeous *Largo sostenuto* slow movement and (especially) the work's heartbreaking farewell (announced by the first violin's terrifying high E harmonic – a harbinger of the deafness that was to blight the composer's final years).

If anything, the account of the First Quartet's terse and grievously underrated D minor successor (completed just 14 months before Smetana's death in May 1884) ratchets up the tension: watch out for the scary, seething rage they convey at the furious start of the third movement. Again, the sense of nourishing dialogue, purposeful thrust and idiomatic rhythmic



Smetana String Quartets
Nos 1 & 2

Pavel Haas Quartet
Supraphon

Ⓢ SU4172-2 (5/15)

Producer **Jiří Gemrot**
Engineer **Karel Soukeník**

187 votes

poise make this music sound newly minted (the second movement's outer portions skip to the manner born, that bittersweet E major melody at its heart gloriously *cantabile* as marked). Some might baulk at the comparatively stingy playing time, but if ever there was an instance of quality triumphing over quantity, it's amply demonstrated here by what is yet another deeply personal and, to my mind, very special offering from this prodigiously gifted Czech ensemble – one that, I suspect, will set the benchmark in this trenchant repertoire for many years to come. The Supraphon recording, too, is admirably rich and realistic.

Andrew Achenbach

RUNNERS-UP



Brahms Clarinet Quintet, etc
Martin Fröst cl/ **Janine Jansen**,
Boris Brovtsyn vns **Maxim Rysanov** va
Torleif Thedéen vc **Roland Pöntinen** pf
BIS Ⓢ BIS2063 (7/14) **129 votes**

Haydn String Quartets, Op 20
Doric String Quartet

Chandos
Ⓢ Ⓢ CHAN10831 (12/14)

129 votes



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PAVEL HAAS QUARTET



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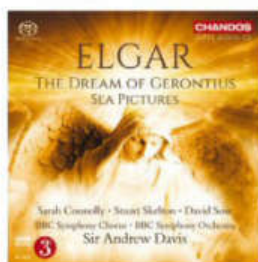
CHORAL

WINNER Elgar *The Dream of Gerontius*

A warm, committed performance from Sir Andrew Davis and his BBC forces

It's good that the two runners-up in this year's Choral category feature recordings of less familiar repertoire, and Philippe Herreweghe's sparkling and dramatic account of Haydn's oratorio. Howells is also well served by David Hill directing the Bach Choir and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in amazing performances of challenging music. The *Stabat mater* is demanding but rewarding, whilst *Sine nomine* is a visionary masterpiece.

Elgar has fared well in recent Choral categories, with recordings of *The Dream of Gerontius*, *The Kingdom* and *The Apostles* being winners in 2009, 2011 and 2013 respectively. All three CDs came from Sir Mark Elder with the Hallé Choir and Orchestra, but with Chandos's latest *Gerontius*, the Elgarian baton has been emphatically picked up by Sir Andrew Davis (pictured above, with David Soar). He conducts a warm, committed performance, with meticulous observation of Elgar's markings. The singing and playing of the BBC musicians is first-rate; particularly outstanding is the BBC Symphony Chorus under its experienced chorusmaster Stephen Jackson. This is one of the best choral versions of *Gerontius*, and the excellence of the choir is matched by the magnificent playing of the BBC Symphony Orchestra.



Elgar *The Dream of Gerontius*. Sea Pictures
Sarah Connolly *mez* **Stuart Skelton** *ten* **David Soar**
bass BBC SO and Chorus /
Sir Andrew Davis
 Chandos
 © 2014 CHSA5140 (11/14)
 Producer **Brian Pidgeon**
 Engineer **Ralph Couzens,**
Jonathan Cooper
127 votes

I agree with Andrew Achenbach, in his review, that sometimes this performance might have benefited from more energy; for example in the Demons' chorus. Perhaps, too, the Angel's Farewell doesn't quite have the glowing radiance of the classic Barbirolli version; nevertheless, Davis's authoritative direction always lets Elgar's emotional and spiritual vision reach the listener with eloquent clarity.

I also share AA's view that, of the three splendid soloists, Sarah Connolly's contribution is a very special one – and her affectionate interpretation of *Sea Pictures* is another strong plus-point; no mere disc-filler, but rather an essential part of this marvellous and truly worthy winner.

Christopher Nickol

RUNNERS-UP



Haydn *Die Jahreszeiten*
Soloists; Collegium Vocale Gent;
Champs-Élysées Orchestra /
Philippe Herreweghe
 PHI Ⓜ ② LPH013 (9/14) **126 votes**



Howells *Stabat mater. Sine nomine, etc*
The Bach Choir; Bournemouth
Symphony Orchestra / David Hill
 Naxos Ⓟ 8 573176 (11/14)
124 votes

SOLO VOCAL

WINNER Schubert 'Nachtviolen'

Here is a recital that no one who loves Schubert should miss

Where to start with this treasure-trove of a disc? It says much for Christian Gerhaher's standing that of the final Solo Vocal shortlist of three, two are his. The Mahler is glorious, the Schubert even more so. The disc's title comes from a seemingly modest song, a paean to the sweet violet, in itself a flower symbolising faithfulness and modesty. These are qualities found in all the performances here, for both artists are utterly faithful to Schubert's intentions and wonderfully understated in execution. And though the mood is predominantly reflective and melancholy, there's a wealth of nuance and variety within that.

Choosing to begin with 'An den Mond in einer Herbstnacht' – eight minutes long and demanding of the singer everything from hushed intimacy to high drama – is a bold move. And while nothing is ever overstated, neither is it ever merely beautiful, ravishing though Gerhaher's voice is. Huber is everywhere the most attentive yet un-egotistical support act. Their planning of this disc is another marvel, choosing to follow this first track with the Goethe setting 'Hoffnung': 80 seconds of rapture. There are many other examples of judicious programming, not least the juxtaposition of the desperate protagonist of 'Über Wildemann' (prefiguring *Winterreise* of the following year) and the chorale-like 'Der Wanderer'.

Even in a song such as 'Der Zwerg', with its high-gothic sentiments involving a murderous



Schubert 'Nachtviolen'

Christian Gerhaher bar

Gerold Huber pf

Sony Classical ©

88883 71217-2 (A/14)

Producer **Wilhelm Meister**

Engineer **Winfried Messmer**

90 votes

dwarf and a contrite queen, these artists show that less is more. Huber doesn't overstate the piano *tremolos* with which Schubert builds such a sense of foreboding (recalling not only 'Erlkönig' but also the *Unfinished* Symphony), while Gerhaher allows the direct speech to make its effect without overstatement (sounding simpler here, and more energised than Fischer-Dieskau and Moore), while his uppermost notes have a rapt beauty.

Add to that a natural recording, and you have a recital that no one who loves Schubert should miss. Putting the notes alongside each text in the booklet is also a helpful touch. In the end, I can only echo the sentiments of my esteemed colleague Richard Wigmore: 'A superlative recital by a singer who for vocal beauty, poetic insight and expressive immediacy is surely unsurpassed in Lieder today.'

Harriet Smith

RUNNERS-UP



Mahler Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen, etc

Christian Gerhaher bar **Montreal**

Symphony Orchestra / Kent Nagano

Sony Classical © 88883 70133-2 (6/14)

84 votes



'Fleurs'

Carolyn Sampson sop

Joseph Middleton pf

BIS © BIS2102 (5/15)

70 votes





RECITAL

WINNER 'A French Baroque Diva'

Sincere singing from Sampson in this musically thrilling contextual journey

It is no longer enough for recitals merely to bunch together a dozen or so favourite lollipops. The most stimulating essays in the genre are revealing a clear fashion for a proper conceptual theme that requires some scholarly research and creative programming, placing musical entertainment and philological exploration on an equal par. The shortlisted finalists for this year's Recital Award typify this trend, and best of the distinguished crop is Jeffrey Skidmore and Carolyn Sampson's exposition of the career of Marie Fel (1713-94), the daughter of a Bordeaux organist and mentioned in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (his 1752 setting of *Salve Regina* is clearly influenced by the Neapolitan school of Pergolesi & co). Fel made her debut at the Académie Royale de Musique (ie the Paris Opéra) as Venus in a revival of Louis Lacoste's *Philomèle* in October 1734; the radiant Sampson leads the assembled choral and orchestral forces of Ex Cathedra through Lacoste's nine-minute 'Ah! quand reviendront nos beaux jours?'. From 1739 Fel performed in many of Rameau's productions of operas, but this team of musicians has already recorded an accomplished anthology of Rameau's operatic scenes (also for Hyperion), so this time the greatest French Baroque master gets relatively minimal attention with three well-chosen contrasting samples; Télétaire's plaintive



'A French Baroque Diva'

Arias for Marie Fel

Carolyn Sampson *sop*

Ex Cathedra / Jeffrey Skidmore

Hyperion

© CDA68035 (7/14)

Producer **Adrian Peacock**

Engineer **David Hinitt**

90 votes

Sponsored by

Mrs Joan Jones

bassoon-driven lament 'Tristes apprêts' from *Castor et Pollux*, admired later by Berlioz, is an entirely different theatrical animal from a charming divertissement from *Les surprises de l'Amour*, in which numerous colourful orchestral effects illustrate the siren Parthénopée's casting a spell upon an enchanted lyre. A broad range of sacred pieces reveals Fel's activities at the Concert Spirituel, including extracts from motets by Mondonville and a virtuosic extract from Lalande's *Cantate Domino* that was included in her last public performance on Christmas Day 1769. Skidmore's expert direction, Ex Cathedra's stylish orchestra (and expert choir) and Sampson's sincere singing ensure that this is both musically thrilling and a fascinating contextual journey. **David Vickers**

RUNNERS-UP



'Stella di Napoli'

Joyce DiDonato *mez*

Chorus and Orchestra of Opéra de Lyon / Riccardo Minasi

Erato © 2564 63656-2 (11/14) **87 votes**



'Semiramide' La Signora Regale

Anna Bonitatibus *mez*

Accademia degli Astrusi;

La Stagione Armonica / Federico Ferri

DHM © 2 88725 47986-2 (9/14) **83 votes**

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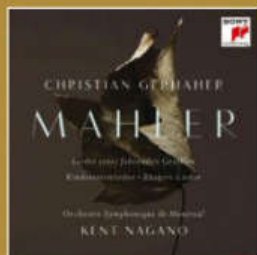
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OPERA

WINNER R Strauss *Elektra*

Chéreau's swansong is elevated by the sheer stamina of Evelyn Herlitzius

In many ways this is an unlikely Award-winner. Hugo Shirley's original review had well-founded reservations about the singing, the production, the filming and even the English subtitles. He might also have mentioned the gushy self-congratulatory tribute to Patrice Chéreau in the DVD booklet. But the thing is, this *was* Chéreau's swansong – he died three months after the premiere – and love him or loathe him, his work has left its mark on theatrical and operatic history. That, plus the sheer stamina and presence of Evelyn Herlitzius's *Elektra* and the terrific energy and pacing of Salonen's conducting, is enough to put this DVD in contention.

As a bonus there's a 23-minute interview with Chéreau, in which he confides some of the thought processes behind his concept – ranging over the versions of the Aeschylus tale, its reconfiguration by Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Strauss, and the resulting challenges it poses compared to those in Wagner and Janáček. Much food for thought there, and his observations go some way towards explaining the blank greyness of the sets and the seemingly low-key quality of some of the characterisation (the interviewer perhaps didn't dare ask why Chéreau had the singers in distressed-casual garb, as though at a pre-costume rehearsal).



R Strauss *Elektra*
Soloists; Gulbenkian
Chorus; Orchestre de Paris
/ Esa-Pekka Salonen
Stage director
Patrice Chéreau
Video director
Stéphane Metge
 Bel Air Classiques
 Ⓢ DVD BAC110 (9/14)
52 votes

True, Herlitzius does not possess a voice of great intrinsic beauty – it is indeed 'slightly curdled', as HS put it. But her sheer power is undeniable, as is the dramatic intensity of her acting. On the other hand, Waltraud Meier's *Klytemnestra* is curiously pale. But as the drama ratchets up towards and through the murder scene, and into the sickeningly rapturous celebration that follows, you realise that there is a powerful guiding spirit behind the production. It has documentary value, for sure, which perhaps gives it the edge on this year's other shortlisted contenders, but it also packs a considerable punch. **David Fanning**

RUNNERS-UP



Wagner *Parsifal* **Soloists; Metropolitan**
Opera Chorus and Orchestra / Daniele
Gatti *Stage director* **François Girard**
 Sony Classical
 Ⓢ ② DVD 88883 72558-9 (6/14)
50 votes



Britten *Death in Venice*
Soloists; Chorus and Orchestra of
English National Opera / Edward Gardner
Stage director **Deborah Warner**
 Opus Arte Ⓢ DVD OA1130D (7/14)
49 votes



CONCERTO

WINNER Beethoven Piano Concertos Nos 3 & 4

Maria João Pires allows Beethoven's ominous harmonies to tell their own story

Against two original and purposeful new Beethoven piano concerto cycles, Alisa Weilerstein's superb Dvořák concerto disc proved powerless to intervene. But, as they say, they're all winners really, and Maria João Pires and Daniel Harding's recording is emblematic of the fact that, in this category, 2015 was always likely to be Beethoven's year.

We've already had Chailly's militant rethink of the symphonies, while Ronald Brautigam's BIS cycle has performed comparably invasive surgery on the piano sonatas. And this year Pires and Leif Ove Andsnes have turned our attention back towards the piano concertos, the intensity of these two major cycles unfolding simultaneously, immersing thirsty ears in the nuance and interpretational leeway of these endlessly fascinating scores.

Why did Pires prevail? Because she got more votes; but also, perhaps, because her recording offers more in the way of talking-points. Why does she extend the opening movement of the Fourth Concerto to just short of 20 minutes, which although not unprecedented, has the effect of subtly restaging the music's architecture? Rarely have I felt so free to walk my ears around such familiar terrain while soaking in the vistas from a fresh perspective.

Pacing is not everything, though. The tonal quality of Pires's playing is essential to this expressive reboot:



Beethoven

Piano Concertos Nos 3 & 4

Maria João Pires *pf*

Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Daniel Harding

Onyx (P) ONYX4125 (10/14)

Producer **John Fraser**

Engineer **Arne Akselberg**

70 votes

at once poetically boundless yet deftly controlled – dynamically contained, yes, yet never glossing over light-switch changes of mood. The dialogue between soloist and orchestra in the slow movement is articulated with frank speaking, a steely and objective approach that allows Beethoven's ominous harmonies to tell their own story. The Third Concerto wears explicitly its Mozartian roots (it's in C minor, like its source, Mozart K491), Pires again perched winningly (as it turns out) between open-ended introspection and fierce clarity. The disc is dedicated to the memory of Claudio Abbado, who would undoubtedly have beamed with pride at how his one-time charge Daniel Harding conducts himself here. Translucent, yet penetrating textures – a flawless match for Pires's pianism. **Philip Clark**

RUNNERS-UP



Beethoven Piano Concertos Nos 2 & 4
Mahler Chamber Orchestra
Leif Ove Andsnes *pf*

Sony Classical (P) 88883 70548-2 (6/14)

50 votes



Dvořák Cello Concerto etc
Alisa Weilerstein *vc*
Czech Philharmonic Orchestra / Jiří Bělohlávek

Decca (P) 478 5705DH (7/14) **36 votes**

CONTEMPORARY

WINNER **Nørgård** Symphonies Nos 1 & 8

Oramo and his Vienna players prove Nørgård is neither dense nor difficult

In the anniversary year of two Nordic giants it feels right that the Contemporary category should celebrate one of the region's great composers of today. Many contemporary composers have established themselves as singleminded purveyors of their own musical worlds. Per Nørgård (b1932) has a more all-embracing attitude. He is one of the foxes, who know many things, rather than a determined hedgehog like Birtwistle or the more playful Unsuk Chin. That can make his trajectory harder to grasp but the present disc should help spread the word.

Unquestionably Denmark's leading living composer, possibly the only such creative figure to appear naked on the cover of a book about his music, Nørgård began as a pupil of Vagn Holmboe. That he was also a Sibelius disciple is immediately apparent in the elemental First Symphony (1953-5, rev 1956), music of a breadth and toughness already disdained in advanced circles.

Moving through mainstream modernism and premature minimalism Nørgård discovered his own guiding principle in the late-1960s, the so-called 'infinity row' which enabled him to generate musical structures in a manner comparable with computer-generated fractal forms. By the time of the Eighth Symphony (2010-11) he had ranged far and wide, taking a particular interest in the outsider art of



Nørgård

Symphonies Nos 1 & 8

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Sakari Oramo

Dacapo

Ⓢ Ⓜ 6 220574 (8/14)

Producer **Preben Iwan**

Engineer **Jens Jamin**

160 votes

Adolf Wölfli, but despite the Symphony's palpably 'modern' feel, its mood is buoyant. The 'classical' three movements create their own form, flowing freely in the iridescent arcs that are a constant in his work.

Don't miss this rare opportunity to hear the Vienna Philharmonic in the music of our own time. The ensemble established an instant rapport with Sakari Oramo, a suitably Sibelian stand-in for Lorin Maazel, some years ago. Let's hope this audacious project (the Eighth is a first recording) doesn't prove to be a one-off. Nørgård can be a disconcerting companion but he's neither dense nor difficult here, that glittering vision wonderfully well captured in state-of-the-art sonics.

David Gutman

RUNNERS-UP



Chin Piano Concerto, Shen Concerto, etc

Alban Gerhardt vc **Sunwook Kim** pf

Wu Wei sheng Seoul Philharmonic

Orchestra / Myung-Whun Chung

DG Ⓢ Ⓜ 481 0971GH (11/14) **123 votes**



Birtwistle Chamber Music

Amy Freston sop **Roderick Williams** bar

Lisa Batiashvili vn **Adrian Brendel** vc

Till Fellner pf ECM New Series

Ⓢ Ⓜ 476 5050 (8/14) **101 votes**

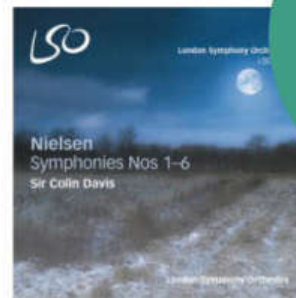


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GRAMOPHONE

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Richard Osborne welcomes Sir Antonio Pappano's fine new recording of Verdi's great Egyptian opera with Anja Harteros and Jonas Kaufmann leading the cast



Verdi

Aida

Anja Harteros *sop*.....Aida

Jonas Kaufmann *ten*.....Radamès

Ekaterina Semenchuk *mez*.....Amneris

Ludovic Tézier *bar*.....Amonasro

Erwin Schrott *bass-bar*.....Ramfis

Marco Spotti *bass*.....King of Egypt

Eleonora Buratto *sop*.....Priestess

Paolo Fanale *ten*.....Messenger

Chorus and Orchestra of the Accademia Nazionale

di Santa Cecilia / Sir Antonio Pappano

Warner Classics © © 2564 61066-3 (146' • DDD • S/T/t)

Aida is the most classically concise of the great 19th-century grand operas yet it remains the one most closely associated with theatrical excess. To savour its qualities, it should be heard first, seen later, which is why the gramophone has played so important a role in its performing history. Nowadays record companies mainly serve up opera on DVD or in cheap-to-record concert performances. Yet, as Antonio Pappano has had the courage to insist, you cannot record *Aida* in concert. Set in temple and tomb, by river and city gate, the sound planes are too various, the range of dynamics too complex to replicate in concert-hall conditions.

Aida received its first complete studio recording in Rome in 1928 but it was

the 1959 Decca recording – produced in Vienna by John Culshaw with Karajan conducting a largely Italian cast – that finally gave us what Andrew Porter, writing in these columns, called ‘a sound-realisation of the score which transcends any shortcomings inherent in physical staging and brings us a step closer to that ideal imagined performance’. Not that the Decca set displaced the theatrically thrilling, albeit more conventionally produced, 1955 Serafin recording with Maria Callas as Aida and Tito Gobbi as a near-definitive Amonasro.

The new recording, produced by Stephen Johns, stands within that broad EMI tradition, albeit with a larger stage picture and a greatly enhanced dynamic range



'The result is a vocally lyrical Aida with Pappano's cast, like Karajan's, never needing to force the moment'

Anja Harteros is arguably the most interesting Aida on record since Callas, albeit differently characterised. Where Callas is every inch the lovelorn warrior princess, Harteros is a humane and articulate Aida who is palpably not the mistress of her destiny. Her top C near the end of 'O patria mia' is neither as *pianissimo* nor as *dolce* as Caballé's on the Muti recording, but that – for all but the most ardent canary-fancier – is beside the point when Caballé lacks the power persistently to outface Fiorenza Cossotto's dauntless Amneris and is never as at one with her Radamès, Plácido Domingo, as Harteros is with the leonine yet liquid-toned Kaufmann.

It matters little in an intelligently produced studio recording that of the principals only Ekaterina Semenchuk has sung her role on stage, though her Amneris is indeed one of the finest on record. Ludovic Tézier is an impressive Amonasro. Apart from an indistinct final syllable on 'Ei t'ama' as Amonasro confronts his daughter with the fact of Radamès's love for her, he is a consistently strong player. Marco Spotti makes a plausible King, but Erwin Schrott's High Priest sounds too benign to be the regime's political enforcer.

Pappano has already given us an exceptional recording of the *Messa da Requiem* (EMI, 10/09), which Verdi wrote shortly after *Aida*. The concentrated quiet of the choral work in the temple scenes, where Eleonora Buratto contributes an exquisite High Priestess, echoes this. In the trial scene and the lovers' entombment, the new recording perhaps deploys too few

tricks. I rather miss Culshaw's contrived but subtly layered acoustic picture; and prefer hieratic brass which is palpably *nel sotterraneo* as Verdi directs. (The 1955 Serafin recording has this exactly right.) But the singing of the doomed lovers has tenderness and beauty, and the preternaturally quiet Santa Cecilia string-playing is exquisitely managed as the drama makes its longed-for tryst with silence.

No recording is without the occasional oddity of balance and perspective. And Warner's booklet is poor, preferring a PR puff to an essay on the opera itself. But these are minor matters in the presence of what is as fine an all-round *Aida* as the gramophone has yet given us. **G**

Selected comparisons

Serafin (1/56⁸) (WARN) 2564 63409-7

Karajan (11/59⁸) (DECCA) 475 8240DOR2

Solti (7/62⁸) (DECCA) 478 2679DB2

Muti (2/75⁸) (EMI) 640630-2



Anja Harteros: a humane and articulate Aida

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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

beautifully accommodated to the opera's need, and the listener's. Where the new set resembles the 1959 Decca is in the quality of the conducting. Pappano's direction, like Karajan's, is organic as the work is organic: each episode finely shaped within itself (the Triumphal Scene is beautifully judged) yet built unerringly into the larger whole. I don't hear this to the same extent in Muti's 1974 EMI recording and certainly not in the 1961 RCA set, where a strong cast headed by Leontyne Price and Jon Vickers has to do battle with Solti's brazen and occasionally thoughtless conducting.

Karajan has the Vienna Philharmonic but it is arguable that Pappano goes one better, with orchestral playing of rare accomplishment from an Italian ensemble which is alive to the opera's every word. (And motion: the ballet sequences are superbly realised.) In both performances the orchestra is a powerful additional player which supports the singers at every turn. The result is a vocally lyrical *Aida* with Pappano's cast, like Karajan's, never needing to force the moment. We hear this at the very outset in Jonas Kaufmann's account of 'Celeste Aida', less visceral than some but wonderfully mellifluous and crowned by a rarely heard quietly diminishing high B flat.

Orchestral



Philip Clark on a new disc of music by a Chicago-born innovator:

'The title Krazy Kat: A Jazz Pantomime promises so much, especially if, like me, you adore cats and love jazz' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 52**



Edward Seckerson listens to Rattle's new Berlin Sibelius cycle:

'We are fathoming the unfathomable; and the climactic phrases in that tragic oration are overwhelming indeed' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 61**

H Andriessen

'Symphonic Works, Vol 3'

Symphony No 3. Symphonie concertante.

Overture 'Chantecler'

Netherlands Symphony Orchestra /

David Porcellijn

CPO © CPO777 723-2 (53) • DDD



Here is another attractive offering in CPO's valuable Andriessen survey that

pairs a symphony with shorter orchestral works: shorter, but not necessarily lighter, because the symphonies themselves steer away from heavyweight, philosophically charged issues. Like the Second in last year's Vol 2 (3/14), Andriessen's Third (1946) is essentially a genial affair – far more so than, say, Vaughan Williams's Sixth, a near-contemporary whose melodic, harmonic and gestural language it nevertheless in several respects resembles. Once again, the movement titles – here Overture, Sonata, Sarabande and Fugue – suggest the suite more than the symphony. Emotionally, too, there is no attempt to deal with contemporary neuroses and little or nothing that could plausibly be linked to the aftermath of war (though arguably relief and a wish to reaffirm besmirched values could be read into its benign progress). Still, this is expertly crafted music – the fugue is particularly resourceful – which could never be accused of triviality. Within its own narrow frame of reference, the only major criticism that could be levelled at it is that it has a rather routine conclusion.

Sixteen years on, the three-movement *Symphonie concertante* is in some ways more symphonic than the symphony itself. Notwithstanding the title, there are no solo instruments involved; rather, different orchestral sub-groupings are pitted against one another. Once again, the musical language is somewhat academic and circumspect. The variations of the middle movement directly invoke 18th-century

suite models but without seeking to derive any message or dramatic tension from the confrontation of old and new.

The Overture *Chantecler* (1972) invokes Edmond Rostand's play of that name, in which a cockerel awakens its fellow farmyard animals and reminds them of the power of traditional ideals. Here may indeed reside a clue as to the direction of Andriessen's artistic-moral compass, though the music itself remains unpretentious and curiously reluctant to display its true colours.

David Fanning

JS Bach

Keyboard Concertos – BWV1052; BWV1053;

BWV1054; BWV1055; BWV1056; BWV1057

Andreas Staier *hpd*

Freiburg Baroque Orchestra / Petra Mülleijans *vn*

Harmonia Mundi © ② HMC90 2181/2 (109) • DDD



The seven concertos for harpsichord, alongside the five multiple works for two

to four 'cembali', survive as transcriptions of original (and mainly violin) concertos probably from Bach's earlier postings in Weimar and Cöthen. As is usual in Bach's recast works, provenance is of no further concern; whether performed these days on the piano with an ultra-sleek modern chamber orchestra or, as here, with a state-of-the-art Baroque orchestra, the reformed versions make for perennially effective keyboard works.

Andreas Staier's studied *claveciniste* dexterity and rich-palettred approach reinforce the matter with his deeply resonant Parisian copy of a Hass instrument from Hamburg, dating from exactly the time when Bach, his sons and pupils would have been dancing their way through these works in Zimmermann's Coffee House on Sunday afternoons. Dancing, however, is not a primary ingredient in Staier's vocabulary, and it takes some time

to adapt to a deliberate conceit of sustained rigour and gravitas. At its best, the focused determination in the great solos of the D minor (BWV1052) wrest this music from glibness or mannerism towards Bach's core contrapuntal and harmonic priorities.

Likewise, there's a gloriously authoritative narrative brought to the concise F minor (BWV1056), through Staier's cultivated means of connecting ideas without yielding to sentimentality. The line is often fine, because the G minor (BWV1058, a parody of the A minor Violin Concerto) feels as if a mathematical proof is being presented, the orchestra too easily alighting on tried-and-tested instincts. Both these concertos, incidentally, introduce cadenzas in their last movements (where the quasi-fermatas would suggest) to great effect.

Despite the driven and occasionally frenzied bass-lines and the prevalence of couplings that give the harpsichord an unusual presence, the thinned-out E major Concerto parades a conceit of true elegance. The courtliness of the middle movement finds a stately cousin in the burnished reading of the D major (BWV1054), despite a return to the decidedly scrambled and anti-balletic approach to the last movement. Indeed, the refined etching of the second movements – relatively speaking those places which Bach finds least arresting – is one of the greatest achievements of Staier and his colleagues: the D major example is a dark lamentation of profound affect, highly wrought by the soloist's deft timing and the orchestra's ambition to enter his still emotional world.

If you're looking for fun, abandon, lyricism, radiant lift-off (which I miss most of all in the A major, BWV1055) and luminosity, then maybe this is not for you. However, it's still probably the most brilliantly executed of any version in the catalogue, one whose tough, intellectual, aesthetic and geometric logic celebrates Bach with sustained and impressive consideration. **Jonathan Freeman-Attwood**



Marin Alsop conducts Bernstein's 'Kaddish' Symphony and Missa brevis on her new disc on Naxos

Beck

Six Symphonies, Op 2

Thirteen String Chamber Orchestra / Kevin Mallon
Naxos © 8 573323 (70' • DDD)



The high claims frequently made for Haydn's Mannheim-born contemporary

Franz Ignaz Beck (dubbed by the *New Oxford History of Music* 'a Romantic born a generation too early') centre on an arresting group of minor-key symphonies from around 1760. One of them, in G minor, turns up on this CD of Beck's Op 2 symphonies, four scored for strings alone, two with added horns. With its fretful, jerky outer movements (the finale stiffened by bouts of Baroque counterpoint), it's certainly the most vivid work on the disc. In the five major-key symphonies, striking gestures and quirky turns of phrase coexist with stretches of routine *galant* bustle. As in Haydn's earliest symphonies, memorable tunes are at a premium, though Beck lacks Haydn's gift for sustaining momentum over long stretches. But there's much to enjoy in, say, the chamber-musical finesse of the opening *Allegro* of the A major Symphony, No 3,

the brooding C minor *Adagio* of No 4 – shades here of CPE Bach – and the fizzing first movement of No 5, whose surface brilliance and pounding bass-lines proclaim Beck's Mannheim heritage.

Kevin Mallon draws spruce, carefully shaped playing from his Canadian chamber forces, always alive to felicities in Beck's part-writing. While the strings use vibrato sparingly, period instruments would have brought a more astringent edge to performances that tend to be urbane rather than combustible. The animal spirits of the triple-time *Presto* finales emerge here as distinctly subdued. That said, the players phrase the slow movements with grace and sensibility, and evidently relish the lusty exuberance of No 5's opening movement, horns pealing out bravely. The harpsichord continuo is discreetly balanced and the church acoustic gives an attractive bloom to the sound. Allan Badley's booklet-note is long on dry scholarship, short on illuminating advocacy of the individual works – surely a prerequisite with such unfamiliar repertoire. **Richard Wigmore**

Bernstein

Symphony No 3, 'Kaddish'^a.

Missa brevis^b. The Lark^c

^aClaire Bloom narr ^aKelley Nassief sop ^{bc}Paulo Mestre counterten ^aMaryland State Boychoir;

^aWashington Chorus; ^{bc}São Paulo Symphony Chorus; ^{bc}members of the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra; ^aBaltimore Symphony Orchestra / Marin Alsop

Naxos American Classics © 8 559742
(70' • DDD • T/T)



There are a number of recurring themes in Bernstein's symphonic work (indeed his works

for the stage) and the most omnipresent of them is the big 'crisis of faith' issue. Symphony No 3, *Kaddish*, is (along with *Mass*) the most specific in that regard, but the word 'faith' for Bernstein was as much about cementing the belief in who he was and what he sought to achieve as in any religious ideal. He was always reaching for the unreachable and seeking an answer – any answer – to the eminently Ivesian 'unanswered question'. *Kaddish* is as much about addressing the creative spirit as the spirit of creation, and as a composition it is at heart most emphatically about the struggle to express exactly who he was as a composer and consequently as a man.

For that reason I have always enjoyed his daughter Jamie Bernstein's reworking of the narration for *Kaddish* – recorded for

Chandos under Leonard Slatkin (a terrific performance, too) – which makes this point more pertinently and personally than one could have imagined, not least in the conceit of addressing ‘my father’ to Bernstein himself, just as he had in turn sought to address his Creator. It is a telling twist on the original narration, recorded here in a performance of great conviction from Marin Alsop, with the wonderful Claire Bloom achieving a happy medium between the declamatory and the confidential.

Kaddish may be overcooked in some respects but as an example of Bernstein’s compositional gamesmanship – the motivic manipulation for one – it can and does dazzle. It’s also fun to hear him wrestling with the tonal or atonal question: do I write what I think I should write, meaning that which might impress my peers and elevate me to the ranks of the ‘serious’, or do I write what I want to write and indeed write best? He manages both here, pitting tone-rows against the aleatoric and a big ‘rainbow’ of Brahmsian-cum-Bernsteinian tune which ultimately comes to represent his own moment of truth. And, as always, there are instances of pure gold – a consoling lullaby at the heart of the piece (featuring limpid soprano Kelley Nassief) which Bernstein called his ‘Pietà’.

The companion pieces here might well necessitate purchase for hardcore Bernstein aficionados. Just as Bernstein’s ‘voices’ fuelled his inspiration – ‘As long as I sing I shall live’ is a key line in the *Kaddish* narration – so Joan of Arc’s drew him to Jean Anouilh’s play *L’alouette* when in 1955 he made musical flesh of Joan’s ‘voices’ with his incidental music for a Broadway production starring Julie Harris, Christopher Plummer and Boris Karloff. And from this mix of French rustic and lofty medieval, he later recycled and expanded the liturgical elements into a short Mass – *Missa brevis* – for the occasion of Robert Shaw’s retirement from the Atlanta Symphony. This pithy but harmonically vibrant little piece is especially notable for its concluding ‘Dona nobis pacem’ – a moment that brings such outrage in his theatrical masterpiece *Mass* but here even manages a little dance of contrition. **Edward Seckerson**

Kaddish – selected comparison:

J Bernstein, BBC SO, Slatkin

(3/04) (CHAN) CHSA5028 or CHAN10172

Bruch

‘Complete Works for Violin & Orchestra, Vol 2’

Violin Concerto No 1, Op 26.

Serenade, Op 75. In memoriam, Op 65

Antje Weithaas *vn* **Hanover NDR Radio
Philharmonic Orchestra / Hermann Bäumer**
CPO © CPO777 846-2 (78’ • DDD)



Following her fine performances of the Second Concerto and the *Scottish*

Fantasy (10/14), Antje Weithaas turns her attention to the evergreen First Concerto, with an account whose freshness and expressive subtleties continually delight. It’s a very different performance from the excellent one recently released by Guro Kleven Hagen. Hagen’s playing is more straightforward, with a powerful sense of narrative, whereas Weithaas gives us more incidental detail. The contrast is clearly seen in the *Adagio*, where Weithaas’s more leisurely approach, while not neglecting the need to keep an on-wards momentum, is concerned to give each phrase its own expressive character. She’s helped by an especially well-balanced accompaniment, with Hermann Bäumer concerned throughout that countermelodies are clearly projected while giving a varied, always convincing character to the overall sound.

The four-movement Serenade is a pleasing, tuneful work, somewhat similar in design to the *Scottish Fantasy*. But, lacking the Fantasy’s charming local colour (apart from the opening Nordic melody), the later work is much less memorable. There are some beautiful sections, most notably perhaps the last movement’s coda, which provides an unexpected, meditative conclusion. As in the other recording I’m familiar with, by Salvatore Accardo and the Leipzig Gewandhaus with Kurt Masur (1978), it’s very well played by soloist and orchestra. Weithaas misses something of Accardo’s Paganini-like dash in the finale but her wide palette of tone-colours imparts a more alluring atmosphere to the preceding ‘Notturmo’.

In memoriam, an extended *adagio* movement dating from 1893, does succeed in recapturing something of the memorable quality of the First Concerto, with its powerful, solemn character that eventually finds resolution in a consolatory ending. As with the other performances on the disc, it benefits from Weithaas’s thoughtful, committed playing and fine orchestral sound. **Duncan Druce**

Violin Concerto No 1 – selected comparison:

Kleven Hagen, Oslo PO, Engset (8/14) (SIMA) PSC1266

Serenade – selected comparison:

Accardo, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orch, Masur

(9/79⁸, 6/98) (PHIL) 462 167-2PM2

Bruckner

Symphony No 6 (ed Nowak)

**Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra /
Paavo Järvi**

RCA Red Seal © 88875 13126-2 (53’ • DDD)
Recorded live at the Alte Oper, Frankfurt,
May 20-22, 2010

Bruckner

Symphony No 4, ‘Romantic’
(1878/80 version, ed Nowak)

**Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra /
Paavo Järvi**

RCA Red Seal © 88875 13124-2 (63’ • DDD)
Recorded live at the Alte Oper, Frankfurt,
September 3-5, 2009



Given the immediacy of its musical invention and its modest dimensions, the relative neglect of Bruckner’s Sixth Symphony is difficult to fathom, although the long-term paucity of recommendable recordings might well have been a factor. Fortunately, recent years have seen the appearance of a number of outstanding new versions, including Herbert Blomstedt’s with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra (Querstand, 11/13) and Jaap van Zweden’s with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra (Challenge Classics). Now we have another, an extremely well-recorded account under the baton of Paavo Järvi, whose Brucknerian credentials were established a few years back with a notable Seventh Symphony (RCA, 9/09).

Järvi’s Sixth has a feeling of rightness that comes from a full understanding of the work’s architecture as well as its distinctive emotional orbit, all realised with playing of exceptional refinement and expressiveness. The virtues of the performance are too many to detail, but the splendour of the first movement coda and the unforced eloquence of the *Adagio* stand out, while the perceived difficulties of the finale fade into insignificance when performed with such commitment. Choosing between performances of the quality of Blomstedt, van Zweden and Järvi is an unenviable exercise; all have something distinctive to offer and all are worthy a place in any record collection. Possibly Blomstedt has the edge in the two middle movements, but Järvi delivers a sense of elation in the symphony’s coda that is simply incomparable.

The performance of the Fourth Symphony, recorded the previous year, has many of the same qualities. In a short essay

in the CD booklet, Järvi explains that he perceives the symphony as being lighter and sunnier than its companions and seeks to avoid the traditional monumental approach to Bruckner interpretation. The result involves slightly faster tempi than usual in the first two movements but also a convincing sense of power and depth.

Less positively, Järvi also refers to combining details from the various editions 'in the pursuit of realising the optimal version of the Fourth Symphony'. In practice, what we get is essentially the Nowak edition of the 1878/80 score with some minor additions from the Bruckner/Löwe/Schalk version of 1888. These include the lower strings playing *forte* rather than *ppp* in bar 169 of the first movement (4'54") and, most notably, the addition of a cymbal clash in bar 76 of the finale (2'32"). More puzzling is Järvi's decision to accent the non-*pizzicato* strings at the start of the Trio of the *Scherzo* (4'29"), a feature not suggested by any of the editions. There's also an unmarked *crescendo* a few bars before main climax of the *Andante* that ensures the brass resound thrillingly but leaves the *fff* peroration itself at bar 221 (12'10") sounding slightly undernourished.

Järvi's textual adjustments are regrettable but hardly unique; recordings of the

1878/80 version by Jochum (DG), Karajan (DG), Barenboim (Warner) and Jansons (RCO) also include the cymbal clash in the finale. For those untroubled by such issues, Järvi's new recording is one of the most compelling to appear in recent years, although Haitink's 2011 recording with the LSO is at least as distinguished as an interpretation, as well as offering complete fidelity to the Nowak score. **Christian Hoskins**

Symphony No 4 – selected comparison:

LSO, Haitink (2/12) (LSO) LSO0716

Symphony No 6 – selected comparison:

Netherlands Rad PO, van Zweden

(A/13) (CHAL) CC72552

Bruckner

Symphony No 9 (original version, ed Nowak)

Philharmonia Orchestra /

Christoph von Dohnányi

Signum © SIGCD431 (61' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Grosses Festspielhaus,

Salzburg, August 7, 2014



This beautifully prepared account of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony was the Philharmonia's contribution to a complete

cycle of the composer's symphonies performed by a variety of orchestras at the 2014 Salzburg Festival. Christoph von Dohnányi, the orchestra's Principal Conductor from 1997 to 2008, secures playing of exceptional transparency and expressiveness from his old band. Dynamics and balance are perfectly judged throughout, allowing details of the score to be heard that are often masked in other performances. An example of Dohnányi's care for detail is the way that the successive entry of horns, trombones and trumpets after fig A in the *Scherzo* (0'40") cumulatively enrich the orchestral texture rather than one group of instruments apparently superseding the other, as so often heard in less well-managed recordings.

Dohnányi's interpretative approach is clear-sighted and largely non-interventionist. Tempi in all three movements are unexceptional and firmly controlled, the only changes from a steady pulse being those marked in the score. Compared to his 1988 recording with the Cleveland Orchestra (Decca, 6/89 – nla), Dohnányi's new version is slightly broader in the first two movements and offers a somewhat deeper musical experience. For all the eloquence of the playing, however, I found myself occasionally wishing for a

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degree more temperament and intensity, especially in the finale. The great dissonant climax, for example, gives the impression of being precisely controlled rather than terrifying, while a degree more warmth in the coda would have been welcome.

Among the many recommendable recordings of the Ninth Symphony, those by Barenboim (Teldec/Warner Classics), Giulini (DG) and Wand with the Munich Philharmonic (Profil) – not to mention Abbado's 2015 *Gramophone* Recording of the Year – stand out for their interpretative insight and depth of expression. Although not in this class, Dohnányi's new recording is distinguished by the clarity with which it presents Bruckner's score as well as the excellence of its sound. There is no audience noise and applause has been excised. **Christian Hoskins**

Selected comparisons:

VPO, Giulini (8/89) (DG) 427 345-2GH

BPO, Barenboim (10/91*) (WARN) 2564 61891-2

Lucerne Fest Orch, Abbado (9/14) (DG) 479 3441GH

Munich PO, Wand (PROF) PH06045

JA Carpenter

Krazy Kat: A Jazz Pantomime. Carmel Concerto. Piano Concertino^a. Patterns^a

^aMichael Chertock pf

BBC Concert Orchestra / Keith Lockhart

Dutton Epoch © CDLX7321 (53' • DDD)



The title *Krazy Kat: A Jazz Pantomime* promises so much, especially if, like me,

you adore cats and love jazz, and even harbour the suspicion that felines manage, like great jazz musicians do, to find improvisational freedom within routine and discipline. Chicago-born John Alden Carpenter wrote his ballet in 1921, a whole three years before Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* set in motion a domino effect of jazz-meets-classical concertos and orchestral showpieces. The piece is certainly of historical interest, and Carpenter's understanding of 'jazz' is clearly informed by Paul Whiteman (with whom he worked) rather than exhibiting any explicit connection with leading black bandleaders such as Fletcher Henderson or James P Johnson.

This music is well behaved and predictable – not like jazz (or indeed cats) at all – and anyone hoping that *Krazy Kat* might animate the senses with the cartoon anarchy of proto-*Tom & Jerry* chase sequences, as musical styles collide and fall off cliff-edges, will be disappointed. The Los Angeles Philharmonic's 1992

performance under Calvin Simmons on New World Records (albeit in Simmons's own orchestration) demonstrates what can be done with appropriately thespian *rubato* and the Broadway snarl of an idiomatically fit-for-purpose brass section. But the BBC Concert Orchestra and Keith Lockhart are simply not in that class. The harmonic latticework of Carpenter's seventh movement, 'Tempo di Foxtrot' – hints of Ivesian incongruous tonalities – is glossed over here, while the jazzy fight of the concluding *Presto* lacks heavyweight punches.

Patterns for piano and orchestra, Carpenter's attempt to pull off Bergian atonal off-tonality, is as dry and utilitarian as its title; the Concertino is more flaccid concert jazz and *Carmel Concerto* is Carpenter 'doing' Copland or Ferde Grofé's *Grand Canyon Suite*. Not much here, frankly, for anyone who isn't already a Carpenter devotee – pieces and performances only a qualified success. **Philip Clark**

Krazy Kat – comparative version:

Los Angeles PO, Simmons (NEW) NW80228

Dvořák • Lalo

Dvořák Cello Concerto, Op 104 B191

Lalo Cello Concerto

Johannes Moser vc

Prague Philharmonia / Jakub Hrůša

Pentatone © PTC5186 488 (66' • DDD/DSD)



At first hearing, this disc suggested admirable directness and some very lyrical

phrasing. With rhythmically taut and well-drilled orchestral support under Jakub Hrůša, Johannes Moser projects a full tone with no loss of presence when he ventures among the instrument's higher reaches. The opening four minutes or so of the Lalo should tell you more or less all you need to know with regard to Moser's supple approach and the watertight rapport between him and the excellent Prague Philharmonia. The central Intermezzo, so touching in its veiled melancholy, conveys the sort of warming introspection I associate with Pierre Fournier, whereas when Lalo switches to *Andantino con moto* (very much *Symphonie espagnole* mode, this), Moser and his accomplices are admirably light and agile.

The Dvořák Concerto enjoys a symphonically conceived account of the orchestral part. Moser's first entry is strong and confident, and when he goes racing off into the main body of the movement, his playing is lively but without signs of either

undue haste or excessive pressure. It's all so incredibly natural, the second subject as tender as anyone could wish for. Skilfully bowed arpeggios later on really glisten, and that elegiac passage at the first movement's centre (at 9'19") truly touches the heart. So does the *Adagio* (with beautifully balanced woodwinds at the outset), while in the finale, which sets out as a bracing jog-trot, Moser makes light of the various technical challenges that Dvořák poses him.

The recorded sound is, like the playing, absolutely top-notch. Rivals in the Dvořák include Alisa Weilerstein (who likes to live dangerously – and, as I've previously said in these pages, Jiří Bělohlávek's predominantly symphonic view of the score provides a powerful but disciplined framework for her spontaneous, tonally full-bodied playing), Truls Mørk and Mariss Jansons (light and felicitous), and Angelica May with Václav Neumann (the slow movement's cadenza especially affecting). But this new version is up there with the best of them and could happily serve as a credible first choice, at least in the digital stakes. **Rob Cowan**

Dvořák – selected comparisons:

Mørk, Oslo PO, Jansons (11/94*) (VIRG) 735297-2

Weilerstein, Czech PO, Bělohlávek

(7/14, 9/14) (DECC) 478 5705DH or 478 6757DX6

May, Czech PO, Neumann (SUPR) 11 1544-2

Ešenvalds • Šmīdbergs • Vasks

'Kurland Sounds'

Ešenvalds Liepāja Concerto No 4, 'Visions of Arctic Night'^a Šmīdbergs Merry-Go-Round Vasks Symphony No 2

^aInts Dālderis cl

Liepāja Symphony Orchestra / Atvars Lakstīgala
Odradek © ODRCD319 (74' • DDD)



All three composers featured on this luxuriously presented release hail from the

Latvian region of Kurland (also known as Courland), and their music enjoys admirably secure and understanding advocacy from the Liepāja SO under Atvars Lakstīgala.

The centrepiece in what resembles a reassuringly old-fashioned 'overture-concerto-symphony' programme is the fourth in a series of no fewer than 12 concertos commissioned by the Liepāja orchestra (founded in 1881 and the oldest in the Baltic states). Completed in 1912, the Clarinet Concerto by Ēriks Ešenvalds (b1977) inhabits the same readily assimilable, resolutely tonal and strongly communicative idiom that that has made

his choral output so popular. It's cast in three interlinked parts, and tastefully incorporates electronic and offstage effects in its evocation of the aurora borealis; the work's shimmering closing pages momentarily put me in mind of the radiant epilogue of Honegger's *Symphonie liturgique*. Soloist Ints Dālderis performs brilliantly, and the concerto is preceded here by *Merry-Go-Round*, a thoroughly diverting 12-minute curtain-raiser by the one-time art-rock musician turned full-time composer Vilnis Šmidbergs (b1944).

Last, but definitely not least, comes the arresting and powerfully emotive Second Symphony (1998-99) of Pēteris Vasks (b1946). John Storgårds's justly acclaimed world-premiere recording with the Tampere PO provides stiff competition – indeed, the Finn's exemplary conception evinces an epic sweep, tingling concentration and uncompromising intensity of expression that are hard to beat – but every Vasks fan will, I suspect, want to check out Lakstīgala's strongly committed new version too. Boasting superior production values and most helpful documentation, this anthology deserves to do very well. **Andrew Achenbach**

Vasks – selected comparison:

Tampere PO, Storgårds (4/03) (ONDI) ODE1005-2

JF Fasch

Overture Symphonies – FWV K:D1; FWV K:D2; FWV K:F4; FWV K:G5; FWV K:G21

Les Amis de Philippe / Ludger Rémy

CPO © CPO777 952-2 (75' • DDD)



Like his more famous contemporary Telemann, Johann Friedrich Fasch was

always alert to the latest musical trends. When the Italian *sinfonia* became fashionable north of the Alps, he responded with his own hybrid genre incorporating the traditional French Baroque overture within the *sinfonia*'s three-movement plan. The upshot was a series of eight 'Overture Symphonies', scored for strings with an assorted array of wind and brass, five of which are included here.

Fasch was renowned for his wind- and brass-writing, and you can hear why in the panoplies of horns and trumpets, expertly manipulated, in the two D major overtures, and the quartet of horns, plus oboes and bassoons, in the second of the G major works. Telemann, much admired by Fasch, is the obvious reference point in music on the cusp of the Baroque and the

galant (counterpoint is at a premium), though for all his musical *savoir faire*, Fasch lacks Telemann's gift for a catchy tune and a piquant harmonic twist. While the fast movements are carried by their propulsive energy and bold colour contrasts, the central *andantes* emerge as bland and short-breathed, sometimes sounding like fast music slowed down. If the attention occasionally wanders, I sympathise.

Still, it's hard to fault the lively advocacy of the German period band Les Amis de Philippe (the 'Philippe' in question is Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach) under their harpsichordist director Ludger Rémy. Fasch's *allegros*, often in passepied rhythm, go with a lusty swing. The braying, hollering brass enjoy themselves hugely, while oboes and pealing high horns spar agreeably in the F major Overture. Textures are clear and well balanced. If these works aren't quite on the level of Fasch's wind and brass concertos, they contain plenty to tickle the ear, not least in the whooping finale of the F major Overture. As usual, CPO's long booklet-note is printed in minuscule type and translated by someone with scant command of English musical terminology.

Richard Wigmore



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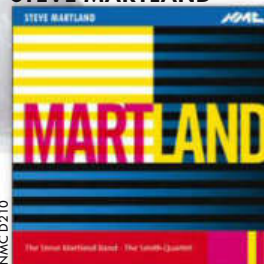
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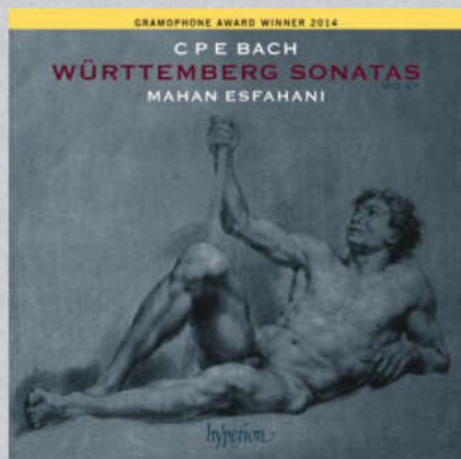
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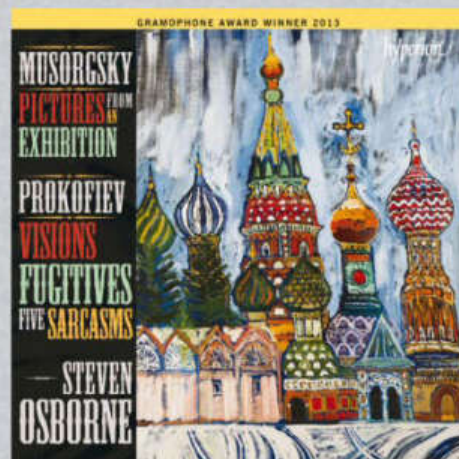


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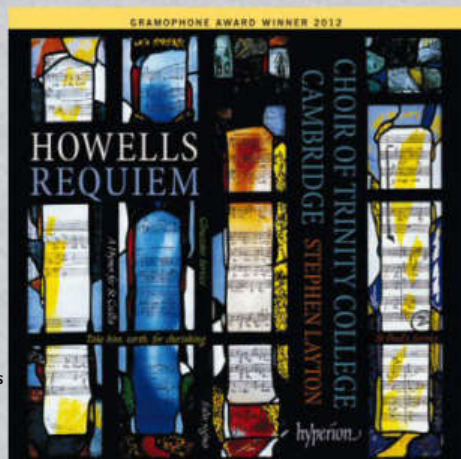


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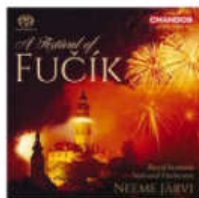
'A Festival of Fučík'

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^aDavid Hubbard *bn*

Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Neeme Järvi

Chandos (F) CHSA5158 (80' • DDD/DSD)



Fučík. Like his best-known work, his very name provokes a smile. But who, on

hearing his one big hit, could tell you anything about either? *Entry of the Gladiators* (originally *Grande Marche chromatique*) was completed on October 17, 1899, in Sarajevo of all places. Its inspiration was *Quo vadis*, an 1896 Roman romp by Henryk Sienkiewicz, the same novel that provided the storyline for the eponymous 1951 film starring Robert Taylor and Deborah Kerr. Fučík was entranced by Sienkiewicz's description of gladiators entering the amphitheatre (the Chandos booklet quotes the passage). How ironic that it should have become irrevocably associated with a different kind of circus after it was published in a band arrangement by one Louis-Philippe Laurendeau and retitled *Thunder and Blazes*. It's not Fučík's fault that in this guise it was degraded as a screamer march used to announce the arrival of clowns and elephants. The Trio is a fine tune and, incidentally, contains what was apparently one of Richard Strauss's favourite modulations. Neeme Järvi and the splendid RSNO restore some dignity to this unjustly maligned crowd-pleaser.

As the rest of this most entertaining CD illustrates, while Fučík did not have the fecund melodic genius of Johann Strauss II or Franz Lehár, nor even of John Philip Sousa, each of the other 13 numbers here (all composed between 1901 and 1912) has got some catchy motif or appealing orchestral feature, such as the two anvils tapping away in *The Merry Blacksmiths*, the fragile piccolo solo at the end of *The Mississippi River* or the comic bassoon solo (full marks to David Hubbard in *The Old Grumbler* (the bassoon was Fučík's own instrument). What he lacks in memorable melody he makes up for with swagger, immense

charm and foot-tapping brio – and, my goodness, this career bandmaster certainly knew how to orchestrate. The sound picture is a Chandos spectacular. Nigel Simeone's excellent booklet usefully places the works in chronological order. All in all, this is the best Fučík disc since Václav Neumann and the Czech Philharmonic in 1976. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Haydn

Symphonies – No 31, 'Hornsignal';

No 70; No 101, 'Clock'

Scottish Chamber Orchestra / Robin Ticciati

Linn (F) CKD500; (F) CKH600

(77' • DDD/DSD)



Top marks to Robin Ticciati for venturing further afield than London for his first

Haydn symphony recording. Top marks, too, for getting his modern-instrument orchestra to play with minimal vibrato and with natural brass instruments, and the timpanist with hard sticks. The selection from the 'London' set is the *Clock*, whose eponymous *Andante* is taken at crotchet=60 – reasonable enough, one might suppose, but the extra pace (Ticciati's erstwhile mentor Colin Davis takes over half a minute longer) gives this clock somewhat the air of being worn upon a white rabbit's wrist: 'I'm late! I'm late!' The central outburst sounds, if not scrambled, rather harried and hurried. Nevertheless, there are some pleasing pullings-back, in the first movement's exposition repeat, for instance – and just the once, so it seems organic rather than dogmatic à la Harnoncourt.

Minuets too are taken fashionably too fast and all repeats are taken both times through. (At least Ticciati – unlike some who should know better, such as Abbado – gets the right wrong notes in the Trio.) The four horns bray and clatter with abandon in the opening of the *Hornsignal* Symphony – even if they rather swamp the small string section – and the various solos elsewhere in the work are shaped with the personality we've come to expect from these Edinburgh players. The first movement of Symphony No 70 is taken almost as recklessly fast as Thomas Fey's recording (quite right, too), if without the Heidelberg's brashness; the *Sturm und Drang* finale is mercifully free of Fey's fatal wilfulness of tempo.

The small string section can turn ever so slightly to sourness when intonation isn't entirely unanimous. Nevertheless, to compare Haydn's D major moods at the

early, middle and late stages of his career, this is a valuable collection, finely recorded (Philip Hobbs) and beautifully packaged, with no fewer than three hefty essays on the music. **David Threshier**

Symphony No 70 – selected comparison:

Heidelberg SO, Fey (6/08) (HANS) CD98 517

Symphony No 101 – selected comparison:

RCO, C Davis (7/81^s) (PHIL) 442 614-2PM2

Ippolitov-Ivanov

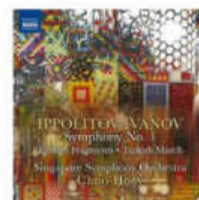
Symphony No 1, Op 46. Turkish Fragments,

Op 62. Turkish March, Op 55

Singapore Symphony Orchestra / Choo Hoey

Naxos (B) 8 573508 (56' • DDD)

From Marco Polo 8 220217 (11/85)



Beggars can't be choosers, and if you really must hear every Russian symphony you

possibly can (yes, I'm in that club) then you currently have little choice regarding the only completed example by Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov (sources list a Second Symphony under the title *Karelia* from 1935, the year of his death, but this seems never to have seen the light of day).

Ippolitov-Ivanov was one of those rather few composers directly associated with the Mighty Handful (around 1880) who went on to find a comfortable niche in the Soviet system, not least in the early days of Soviet radio. He added the 'Ippolitov' apparently to distinguish himself from a critic with that common name. Unfortunately he neglected to add anything to his music that might distinguish him from his teacher Rimsky-Korsakov, his idol Tchaikovsky or the figure of Robert Schumann, who stands as godfather to the entire tradition of academic Russian symphonism.

Within those limits his E minor symphony does have its moments, even some rather touching ones in the 'Elegia' slow movement and in the Trio section to the nigh-on plagiaristically Schumannesque *Scherzo*. Otherwise it is the quintessence of routine. Even the *Turkish Fragments* and the *Turkish March* deliver far less than the titles promise, and certainly less than the vivid *Caucasian Sketches* by which Ippolitov-Ivanov remains best known.

The recording is more than 30 years old and is not a good advertisement either for the orchestra or for the engineering at the time. For the most assiduous collector, alternatives for the symphony at least are traceable, conducted by Veronika Dudarova (Best Buy Classical) and Gary Brain (Conifer, 11/98 – nla).

David Fanning



Giya Kancheli
Chiaroscuro

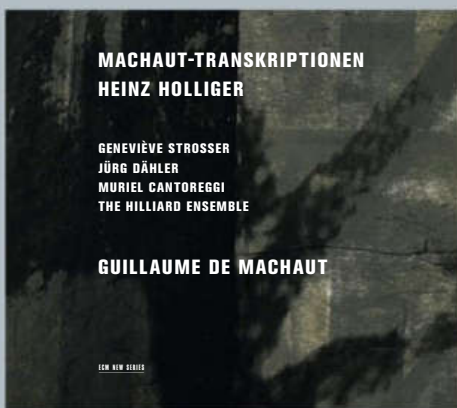
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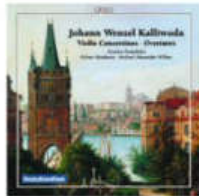
Kalliwoða

Overtures – No 3, Op 55; No 7, Op 101;
No 10, Op 142. Violin Concertinos^a –
No 1, Op 15; No 5, Op 133

^aAriadne Daskalakis;

Cologne Academy / Michael Alexander Willens

CPO © CPO777 692-2 (58' • DDD)



Kalliwoða makes infrequent appearances on disc. I cannot find any mention in the

Gramophone archives of these three overtures and two concertinos, but doubtless they have been recorded previously. If not, they should have been. Kalliwoða, while not scaling the heights, is rather good on his own terms, terms which were noted first in 1826 when his Symphony No 1 was premiered in Leipzig. The 25-year-old composer was praised for not 'trying to be something he is not' (ie Beethoven) but for 'pursuing his own path simply and properly'.

The overtures here are just three of the 24 Kalliwoða produced between 1818 and 1864. None has an extramusical subject, designed merely to provide an attention-grabbing opening to a concert. This they achieve admirably. No 3 in C major (1835), with its glimpses of Weber's influence, lasts a mere 4'31"; longer (and highly praised by Schumann), No 7 in C minor (1838), like No 10 in F minor (1842), has more than a hint of Mendelssohn about it. Any of the three would make an effective curtain-raiser in the Royal Festival Hall or Musikverein.

The two concertinos are full of life, with attractive but not particularly memorable themes, and imaginatively orchestrated. There are echoes of Rode, a sprinkling of Paganini and a strong flavouring of Spohr (if you like his Concerto No 8 'in modo di scena cantante', you'll enjoy Kalliwoða). The American violinist Ariadne Daskalakis negotiates the considerable technical demands of the music efficiently and accurately – I won't say with ease. Beyond that she rarely ventures, with a limited dynamic range and a colourless tone. The music is light, undemanding and showy. It needs to be projected with more debonair swagger, the same panache, in fact, with which Willens and the Kölner Akademie play. **Jeremy Nicholas**

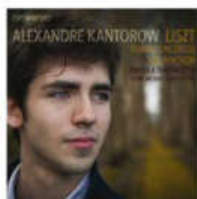
Liszt

Piano Concertos – No 1, S124; No 2, S125.
Malédiction, S121

Alexandre Kantorow *pf*

Tapiola Sinfonietta / Jean-Jacques Kantorow

BIS © BIS2100 (58' • DDD/DSD)



The competition in the two concertos is fierce indeed, but not when they appear

either side of the much less played *Malédiction*. Historically it is an apt choice, for it was begun in 1833, a year after the E flat Concerto (No 1). Both went through a series of revisions; but while the concerto was eventually published in 1856, *Malédiction* lay forgotten until 1915.

So how does Alexandre Kantorow (*b1997*) stack up? Pretty well. The opening bars of the E flat Concerto immediately proclaim a youthful tiger of the keyboard. If tone production is less of a consideration than ardency, it is a marginal concern. His virile sense of drama and crisp response to any question-and-answer argument with the orchestra (especially in the A major Concerto, No 2) are electrifying. Kantorow has a marvellous *leggiere* touch, but when Liszt asks for *con furore, ffff avec enthousiasme, il più presto possibile* (all from *Malédiction*) then Kantorow does not hold back with thrilling bravura, aided by the exemplary support of his violinist-conductor father. Not surprisingly, they are telepathically attuned to one another.

In one area, though – and this applies to all three works – I part company with them. Too frequently, a pause indication in the score becomes not a comma or a couple of deep breaths but a tea break. All tension evaporates before the music resumes, often leading to a slower section where the Kantorows adopt tempi much below the norm. A compact but telling illustration is the unaccompanied four bars before fig G (the *allegro moderato* section) of the A major concerto, marked *Tempo del andante (cadenza)*. Where most seasoned Lisztians (Freire, Katchen, Hough, chosen at random) play these most expressively (0'25"), Kantorow extends them to an unsustainable 0'45". Such tempo relationships may not trouble others as much but they leave this listener with the impression of the lyrical playing applied externally.

The sound recording by BIS's preferred Take 5 team is demonstration-class and blessed with superb detail. It is hard not to be impressed by Kantorow in the concertos, but *Malédiction* is why you should buy the disc. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Maxwell Davies • A Panufnik

Maxwell Davies Symphony No 10, *Alla ricerca di Borromini*^a A Panufnik Symphony No 10^b

^aMarkus Butter *bar* London Symphony

^bChorus and Orchestra / Sir Antonio Pappano

LSO Live © LSO0767 (58' • DDD/DSD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Barbican, London,

^aFebruary 2, ^bOctober 19, 2014



Both these 10th symphonies acknowledge the time-honoured

four-movement prototype, yet they could hardly be more different from each other. Andrzej Panufnik's was written in 1988 for the Chicago SO and despite its brevity has a spaciousness and energy that suggest allusions to the kind of American qualities found, for example, in Copland. Panufnik doesn't deal in destabilising contrasts but his characteristically insistent rhythmic and intervallic patterning sustains the overall design in this late work as it moves to its quiet yet celebratory close. The sense of certainty and security brought out in this accomplished performance will seem all the more assured if heard immediately after the tensions between celebration and questioning that predominate in Peter Maxwell Davies's Tenth (2013-14).

This four-part symphony was written during a period of hospital treatment for leukaemia; but the basic concept, as a composition 'in search of the Italian architect Borromini, preceded that diagnosis. It has its roots in the composer's time as a student in Rome and represents the latest stage of his concern to explore musical equivalents for the innovative architectural structuring he admires in Borromini. The deeply engaged gravity of the enterprise is established in the first part and intensified in the short third part, both purely orchestral. In contrast, part 2 combines a choral setting of a forceful attack on the architect's radical ways with elements from his defence stressing his acknowledgement of the importance of musical performance in churches. Part 4 centres on Borromini's despairing testament, written as he lay dying, while the chorus intones the names of buildings he designed.

This recording of the work's premiere is notable for the degree to which all involved – especially the galvanising conductor Antonio Pappano and the properly operatic soloist Markus Butter – manage to convey so much of the music's dramatic sweep as well as its symphonic substance. The divergence between the character of the vocal writing and the more complex style of the purely orchestral movements is just one of the ways in which the work challenges conventional understanding of what is symphonic, but it coheres as a profoundly personal musical statement, bringing together some of the

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

SUPPRESSED DUTCH COMPOSERS

Tim Ashley listens to a new set bringing together recordings of music by Dutch composers forbidden by the Nazis in occupied Holland



'Utterly remarkable': Henriëtte Bosmans is one of the many composers to discover in Etcetera's reissue box

Released to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, this remarkable set, a compilation of recordings and broadcasts from 1954 to 2011, examines the work of 19 Dutch composers whose music was proscribed and many of whose lives were lost during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands.

The facts are often horrific. Three out of every four Dutch Jews were murdered in the Holocaust, among them Leo Smit, the leading composer of the younger pre-war generation; Sim Gokkes, music director of Amsterdam's Portuguese Synagogue; and Dick Kattenburg, aged 25, whose music remained unpublished in his lifetime. Jan van Gilse succumbed to pneumonia after his two sons, like himself resistance members, were executed. Nico Richter died of illness and injury sustained in Dachau, shortly after the camp's liberation.

Throughout, the set testifies to the courage of those for whom music became an existential assertion of identity in the face of atrocity. Composer-pianist Henriëtte Bosmans and Rosy Wertheim – whose pre-war Paris salon was graced by Honegger, Milhaud and Messiaen – gave clandestine concerts in hiding when public performance of their work was forbidden. Resistance hero Lex van Delden, born Alexander Zwaap, became a leading post-war figure under the name he took as his wartime alias. Not all the composers were Dutch by birth: Ignace

Lilien, who survived using false identity papers, was a Polish-Ukrainian refugee from the First World War.

Many of the works included pre-date or post-date the war, affording us major insights into musical life in the Netherlands between 1900 and the 1960s. Early-20th-century Dutch music is often described as conservatively anti-modernist, which proves untrue. The country's neutrality in the First World War resulted, in fact, in a remarkable openness of influence, though, with the exception of Nico Richter, whose music veers towards atonal, Webernian compression, the impact of the Second Viennese School was minimal.

Ariadne auf Naxos looms large over van Gilse's 1916 Nonet, beautifully played by the Viotta Ensemble and the Ebony Quartet. Others looked to France. Smit's ballet *Schemselnibar*, based on Persian legend, owes much to *Daphnis et Chloé*, while his Cello Concertino is very Debussian: Ed Spanjaard, who lost members of his own family in the Holocaust, conducts lucid performances from 1993 and 1999 respectively, while the young Pieter Wispelwey is his admirable soloist.

Stravinskian neo-classicism and the jazz-inflected modernism of Les Six impacted elsewhere. Lilien, whose day job as a chemical engineer frequently took him to South America, outdoes *Le Boeuf sur le toit* with his fabulous *Modern Times Sonata* for violin and piano, engrossingly performed by Marijke van Kooten and Frans van

Ruth. Van Delden's sinewy orchestral textures have a strong Stravinskian tang, his post-war status reflected in a clutch of Concertgebouw broadcasts from the 1950s and '60s conducted by Jochum, Szell and Haitink.

One striking aspect is the equality accorded women composers in pre-war Netherlands, unique in Europe at the time, one suspects. Wertheim's music, its fluctuating tonal centres curiously reminiscent of Delius, is an acquired taste, though Bosmans, openly bisexual and often uninhibited in expression, is utterly remarkable. Her Cello Sonata, written in 1919 for her cellist lover Frieda Belinfante, is a tremendous work, superbly played here by Doris Hochscheid, with Frans van Ruth again at the piano.

The set includes a great deal of chamber music. Many wartime works, written and sometimes performed in almost unspeakable circumstances, were, of necessity, both small-scale and short. Many were also rediscovered by the set's curator, the flautist Eleonore Pameijer, Artistic Director of the Leo Smit Foundation, set up in 1996 to research the work of all the composers included here. It is to Pameijer that we owe our awareness, above all, of Kattenburg's sad brilliance after his manuscripts were given into her keeping by his surviving family, and of the flautist Ima van Esso, for whom much of his work was written: van Esso was interned with him in Auschwitz, and survived. The sincerity of Pameijer's playing impresses and moves throughout.

There are occasional omissions, most notably Lilien's 1943 *De Ballade van Westerbork*, bravely bearing witness to the concentration camp in the north east Netherlands, where many, Smit and Kattenburg among them, were held before transportation to the death camps in the east. I should also have liked to hear some of Bosmans's late songs, written for the last of her partners, the French soprano Noémi Pérugia. The booklet-notes are overly brief and you need to look up the composers' biographies on the Leo Smit Foundation website. But this is a major issue nonetheless. It breaks your heart, and opens minds and ears to much we haven't encountered before. Outstanding. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



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Baiba Skride recording Nielsen and Sibelius concertos with Santtu-Matias Rouvali and the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra for Orfeo

most fundamental ideas and issues to have concerned Maxwell Davies throughout his long career. **Arnold Whittall**

Nielsen • Sibelius

Nielsen Violin Concerto, Op 33 **Sibelius** Violin Concerto, Op 47. Two Serenades, Op 69

Baiba Skride *vi* **Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra** / **Santtu-Matias Rouvali**
Orfeo ® ② C896 152A (87' • DDD)



'These are not good times for the [Sibelius] Violin Concerto,' says conductor Jukka-Pekka

Saraste on a video at the probing Sibelius exhibition currently showing at Helsinki Town Hall. 'Ideals of playing have changed.' Saraste's point is that the concerto's necessary stillness and tenacity elude most soloists these days. I wonder what he would make of Baiba Skride's recording, which might be a world away stylistically from Ida Haendel's performances but has something of her unfettered sense of peace, inevitability and, yes, tenacity.

We know Sibelius's revision of the concerto reined in the score's virtuoso tendencies. We also know a little about the violin the composer was gifted by a

seafaring uncle and its sweet, tight sound. Skride's own sound is notably sweet and tight, and her general demeanour in the concerto more shamanistic than heroic. She doesn't have a great deal of power, particularly down low, but she has astonishing purity, accuracy and clarity. The first *Allegro* breathes patience, particularly in those circling and patterning passages that draw excitable, breathless playing from others (Batiashvili, Vengerov).

That lack of power means Skride can't quite weigh the slow movement down like Haendel did, but the engineers meet her halfway in a recording that's more floating than rooted. Skride has no fear of the movement's inbuilt aimlessness, which more than compensates. She occasionally struggles with the quick, intricate demands of the finale – there are two slips in the opening sequence – but still that patient weave, that unfettered limpidness, is there. Santtu-Matias Rouvali makes more sense of the concerto's oddball final bars than most. Together, Rouvali and Skride find the ideal footing for the Two Serenades, particularly the latter. The orchestra's veiled tone is like a velvet cushion for Skride's ribbon of sound, frequently devoid of vibrato – often fragile, always delicate.

Skride approaches the Nielsen Concerto with much of the same care, but that's

really not the name of the game in this piece. The opening cadenza is nowhere near abrupt enough and when Nielsen's japes kick in, it all sounds like a Victorian parlour game compared with Vilde Frang's copious musical dynamite. There's a whiff of sentimentality in Skride's tight vibrato at the end of the *Largo* which doesn't fit the aesthetic, and in the ensuing *Allegro cavalleresco* (which is on the slow side) the orchestra is all smoothness too; surely the score suggests it's attempting to cajole the soloists on to a different course?

The same qualities that make Skride's Sibelius create a gorgeous *Poco adagio* in the Nielsen, the soloist finding a wonderful sense of space (try the exchanges with the brass from 3'44"). But in the *Allegretto scherzando* that rounds the concerto off with increasing mischief, politeness once more gets the better of both soloist and orchestra. Put Skride's cadenzas next to Vilde Frang's and you see how the two temperaments of these outstanding violinists contrast so sharply. Frang's cadenzas, all spiky and impish, are in Nielsen's image. Skride's, delicate, earnest and smooth, aren't.

Andrew Mellor

Nielsen – selected comparison:

Frang, Danish RSO, Jensen

(9/12) (EMI/WARN) 602570-2

René Jacobs Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin

Mozart Die Entführung aus dem Serail

Photo: Malina Visuals for harmonia mundi



Konstanze
Robin Johansson
soprano

© Uwe Arens

Blonde
Mari Eriksmoen
soprano

Photo D.R.

Belmonte
Maximilian Schmitt
tenor

© Marco Borggreve

Pedrillo
Julian Prégardien
tenor

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Ossin
Dimitry Ivashchenko
bass

© Andreas Stinberg

Bassa Selim
Cornelius Obonya
spoken role

© Anjeza Cikopano



2CD HMC 902214.15

The 1782 premiere in Vienna of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* brought Mozart unprecedented public and professional success. This dazzling triumph did not come by chance: with music placing the accent on exoticism and a libretto celebrating the ideas of the Enlightenment, the opera ran counter to contemporary prejudices concerning the Ottoman Empire. In championing a German national opera, Mozart gave an important place to the spoken dialogue, often severely cut, but fully restored and brought to life here to underline the astounding modernity of the text.

'Mr. Jacobs has done it again. His recordings of Mozart's operas bring back some of the thrill that must have attended these works when they were new.' **New York Times**

'René Jacobs's Mozart opera series [is] one of the recorded marvels of our time'
Gramophone



Rachmaninov · Balakirev

Balakirev Russia

Rachmaninov Symphony No 3, Op 44

London Symphony Orchestra / Valery Gergiev

LSO Live (M) (S) LSO0779 (57' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Barbican, London,

November 11 & 13, 2014

Rachmaninov

Rachmaninov Symphony No 3, Op 44^a. Caprice bohémien, Op 12^a. The Rock, Op 7^b. Symphonic Dances, Op 45^b. Vocalise, Op 34 No 14^b

Orchestre de Paris / Paavo Järvi

Erato (B) (2) 2564 61957-9 (117' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Salle Pleyel, ^bOctober 19-21, 2011; ^aMarch 27 & 28, 2013



Rachmaninov's Third Symphony is the shared work in these otherwise dissimilar offerings. Valery Gergiev's view is dark and stormy, his relatively slow pacing undercut by so many lugubrious inflections that the piece loses its overall shape. Some will admire the passionate Mahlerian outburst at the heart of his first movement, relishing the extreme contrasts of tempo and mood in the tripartite second, but the finale's final flourish, delivered with yet another awkward gear change, could not come soon enough for this listener. Part of the problem is the shallowness of the acoustic. London's Barbican Hall is always a tricky venue for recording and here, with oddly prominent woodwind and overbearing timps, we seem to be allocated a particularly bad seat. Even if you regard Rachmaninov's Third as a vaguely modernist, neo-classical departure (and it's clear that the conductor does not), the music needs more than LSO Live's attenuated wisp of string sonority to make it sing.

Paavo Järvi is no speed merchant, and some might find his performance comparatively tame even if his technical control and formidable sense of logic are never in doubt. To clinch the deal, the band is made to sound far more voluptuous than its rival. This is so despite the fact that the live recording was made in the Salle Pleyel, subsequently abandoned by the orchestra in favour of higher-tech suburban quarters. Granted, Järvi's pay-off is almost as mannered as Gergiev's. Neither Previn (EMI, 8/77) nor Jansons (EMI, 12/93) interpolates a *rallentando*, the latter's zippier approach throughout signalled by his elimination of the first-movement

exposition repeat. Both Gergiev and Järvi provide the repeat, and I will certainly be revisiting the fine detailing of Järvi's individualistic Parisian winds, never indulged at the expense of forward momentum.

Gergiev's coupling is a Balakirev obscurity of mainly specialist interest. Järvi offers a slightly puzzling jumble of early and late Rachmaninov stretched over two sound carriers, the middle years being neglected save for the *Vocalise* (for which the booklet provides too early a composition date). Given in its purely orchestral guise, that piece is placed at the end of a second disc which starts with the composer's swansong and proceeds by way of *The Rock*, which Tchaikovsky had admired in 1893. Perhaps it doesn't matter when Järvi's carefully prepared readings have such character and flair. The conductor attempts some spooky hesitations in the *Symphonic Dances'* unnerving waltz movement, and he is sentimentally interventionist in the finale before revving up for one last climax (interrupted only by Rachmaninov's unexpected restatement of his Orthodox chant at a not easily judged slower tempo). The concluding gong stroke is cut short. There must have been copious applause in the hall, but on both these releases the presence of an audience has been meticulously expunged. **David Gutman**

Respighi

Ballata delle gnomidi. Belkis, regina di Saba - Suite. Metamorphoseon
Liège Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / John Neschling

BIS (F) (S) BIS2130 (72' • DDD/DSD)



Composers can be wayward judges of their own work. Respighi, it would seem, disliked his *Metamorphoseon*, commissioned in 1930 by Serge Koussevitzky as one of a number of works (the list included Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*) to mark the Boston Symphony's 50th anniversary. Though the premiere was a success, Respighi deemed its composition 'forced', and discouraged further performances – a curious response, since it's arguably the most striking piece in John Neschling's latest album of his music.

In form, it's an extended set of variations on a slowly unwinding theme, the contours of which suggest both Gregorian chant and Slavonic folksong, a reflection perhaps of both Respighi's interest in early music and

his Russian training. The style is post-Romantic, but there's an almost Baroque profusion of inspiration in its restlessly shifting orchestral patterns. The scoring has all Respighi's usual glamour but is thicker and darker in colour than much of his work, which may have been a source of his dissatisfaction. It's dazzlingly done here, with plenty of grace and panache, by Neschling and his Belgian orchestra.

Its companion pieces find Respighi in decadent mode. The Straussian symphonic poem *Ballata degli gnomidi* found favour with Toscanini in its day (1920), though its subject – the slaughter of a gnome by females of his tribe during an arcane, sadomasochistic ritual – is too misogynistic for comfort. *Belkis, regina di Saba* was a blockbusting ballet, choreographed by Léonide Massine for La Scala in 1932, and clearly designed to cater for every sexual taste with its big solos depicting the Queen of Sheba's erotic awakening and corps de ballet of 'young athletes, tanned and almost naked'. It caused a stir at last year's Proms in a full-on performance by the Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic under Sascha Goetzel. Neschling is altogether more restrained, but the work's heady atmosphere still sends you reeling.

Tim Ashley

Sibelius

Complete Symphonies (Nos 1-7)

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle

Berliner Philharmoniker (F) (S) (4 CDs + (S))

BPHR 150071 (3h 48' • DDD)



There is a sense here of how long and far

Simon Rattle has journeyed with this music – one of his very first recordings (famously so) was of the Fifth Symphony – and by the time we reach the Seventh and last symphony it is indeed almost tangible. I'm not sure I can remember the opening bars of that piece feeling quite so remote, evolving rather than beginning, emerging unformed from the substrata of what has gone before. In that, the famed Berlin Philharmonic string basses – sunk too deep to fathom – are the organic foundation of these performances: the point from which the sound begins and ends.

But that sound – big-boned, fleshy, well-upholstered – is also a bone of contention for me, a handicap in some respects. Thinking back to before Rattle was Sir Simon, when part of his bonding with the City of Birmingham Symphony

Orchestra came out of that first Sibelius cycle, I am mindful, listening to the new one, of just how important the angular, edgier, rhythmic aspects of this music are to its evolution and how easily they can be compromised by a surfeit of 'tone'. The beauty of this music is born of a more primitive hue. So, Karajan's legacy notwithstanding, and for all the fabulousness of some of the playing, I am not entirely convinced, and never have been, that this is the right fit of orchestra and music.

Indeed, if you listen to the cycle chronologically, the first three symphonies are conspicuously disappointing in this respect. You could argue that the First – the most Tchaikovskian of the canon – revels in the Romantic amplitude of the music. It is quite an earful in the outer movements, the big sorrowful tune of the finale darkly resplendent. But the Berlin Philharmonic are inclined to 'shapeliness' in all things; and that, coupled with the fleshiest woodwind sound in the business, means that even the desolate clarinet of the opening sounds too knowing of its pedigree.

In the Second, too, one is too conscious of the 'blend' making for thickness, particularly in the inner voices. The rhythmic elements often feel compromised here, the spread of the sound inappropriate with even the timpani muddled at the rear of the orchestra. The speed of reflexes, the sharpness of articulation, are not always what you want them to be, and it's hard moving this big, plushy sound across so very particular a terrain. Rattle almost pulls off a really impulsive *accelerando* through the stormiest transition of the finale into the second appearance of the big tune, but it is sheer willpower and the force of his personality that pushes against what one feels is an inherent resistance.

The Third, of course, is almost entirely about concision, rhythm, movement – and though there is nothing wrong with the tempi per se in the opening movement (too many, including Barbirolli, take it too slowly), the sense of the imperative that makes the outer movements so exciting is missing. The economy of means needs to be reflected in the leanness of the sound. And, beautiful though it is, I am not thinking cool and refreshing but rather warm and consoling in the second movement. That said, Rattle does catch the mysterious light of solo strings at the heart of it.

The last four symphonies fare markedly better, with the Fourth undoubtedly the star turn of the cycle. From that dramatic plunge into the unknown – a bleak, almost

alien landscape with lowering basses – the expansive (expensive) Berliners at last sound at one with the epic spareness of a piece with two slow movements, and Rattle ensures that space is seemingly created in the playing of them. We are fathoming the unfathomable; and in the great second movement (with Mahler looking on) the climactic phrases in that tragic oration are overwhelming indeed. So too, in a quiet way, the thinning-out of the piece towards its enigmatic close, where it almost seems as if the real concluding bars have somehow evaporated, leaving it unfinished.

Which brings us to Rattle's long and happy relationship with the Fifth – and, yes, this is yet another impressive phase in that journey. There are the things that Rattle always makes tell – the lone bassoon musing amid softly pulsing strings during the lengthy opening sunrise; the big sunburst, trumpets peaking impressively; and the longest of dancing *accelerandos* which is as close as this big beast of an orchestra ever gets to romping. It goes without saying that the aspirational finale is just that, culminating in the most exalted dissonance in music and final chords where the silence between is more deafening than the chords themselves.

The 'illuminated' opening pages of the Sixth are as beautiful as any I know – and are so here – and it is extraordinary how something so emotionally distanced can sound so moving. It remains a matter of taste whether or not there is too much flesh on the sound – concision and pellucidity are key and the finer the brushwork, the more effective in conveying the unique sharpness of the light that this music presents. The more it moves, the more rhythmic it is, the more 'authentic' it sounds.

But, on the plus side, Rattle and the Berliners do convey a wonderful sense of great spaces being traversed as we 'arrive' at the Seventh – and that journey, though compressed in time, seems to summarise a long and eventful lifetime. The most equivocal C major in music (only just) sounds conclusive and yet not. Doubtless there will be more (very different) Sibelius from Rattle and the London Symphony Orchestra. Another chapter begins.

Edward Seckerson

Sibelius

Pelléas et Mélisande – incidental music^a. Musik zu einer Szene. Valse lyrique, Op 96a. Autrefois: scène pastorale, Op 96b^b. Valse chevaleresque, Op 96c. Morceau romantique sur un motif de Monsieur Jakob von Julin

^aPia Pajala sop ^bSari Nordqvist mez

Turku Philharmonic Orchestra / Leif Segerstam
Naxos © 8 573301 (58' • DDD • T/t)

Sibelius

Jedermann, Op 83^a. Two Serious Melodies, Op 77^b. In memoriam, Op 59

^aPia Pajala sop ^aTuomas Katajala ten

^aNicholas Söderlund bass ^bMikaela Palmu vn

^aCathedralis Aboensis Choir; Turku

Philharmonic Orchestra / Leif Segerstam

Naxos © 8 573340 (73' • DDD • T/t)



Pride of place on the third volume in Leif Segerstam's Turku PO series for Naxos of lesser-known Sibelius goes to the incidental music that the composer provided for a 1905 production in Helsinki's Swedish Theatre of Maurice Maeterlinck's symbolist drama *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Sibelius salvaged all but one number for the orchestral suite – go to track 9 to hear the dusky three-minute sequence containing some imaginative writing for principal cello that he left out – and of course we also get to hear *Mélisande*'s haunting Act 3 song 'The Three Blind Sisters' in its original vocal guise (soprano Pia Pajala sings it most eloquently, too). Segerstam masterminds a pungently characterised and keenly perceptive rendering. His daringly spacious treatment of the concluding *Andante* (entitled 'Death of *Mélisande*' in the suite) tops the seven-minute mark, but so sure is his control of line it never drags.

Next comes the unpublished and often appealing *Musik zu einer Szene*, dating from 1904 and originally designed to accompany a tableau. All but one of the four remaining items – namely the charming pastoral miniature *Autrefois* of 1919 with its fetching vocalise for two voices – are waltzes: the manuscript of the innocuous *Morceau romantique* (1925) was auctioned to raise money for a children's hospital, but the less said about the feeble *Valse chevaleresque* (1921) the better.

The lion's share of Vol 4 is given over to what is only the second complete recording of the extensive score that Sibelius supplied for the Finnish National Theatre's November 1916 staging of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Jedermann*, an adaptation of the medieval morality play *Everyman*. This dates from the period when the composer was immersed in the second version of his Fifth Symphony and was a venture that incontestably ignited his imagination – just sample the searchingly inspired string-writing in Nos 11 and 14, the commodious skip



The Hallé Orchestra and Sir Mark Elder rehearsing Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony* for the latest release on the orchestra's own label

of No 4 ('Dance Song') and No 8 ('Oi, Lempi, armas Lempi!'), or the stoically affirmative angels' chorus which closes proceedings. Throughout, Sibelius employs his varied vocal, choral and instrumental forces (including piano and organ) with striking resourcefulness. Segerstam's often daringly spacious conception absorbingly complements Vänskä's splendid Lahti account – diehard Sibelians will, I fancy, want to have both – while Turku PO member Mikaela Palmu responds with big-hearted dedication in the lovely *Two Serious Melodies* for violin and orchestra (1914–15). Alas, to my ears at any rate, Segerstam's waywardly measured view of the glowering 1910 tone-poem *In memoriam* doesn't come off, but everything else on this finely engineered disc most certainly does.

Andrew Achenbach

Jedermann – comparative version:

Lahti SO, Vänskä (5/96) (BIS)

BIS-CD735 or BIS-CD1912/14

Vaughan Williams

A Sea Symphony (Symphony No 1)

Katherine Broderick *sop* **Roderick Williams** *bar*

Hallé Choir; Hallé Youth Choir; Schola Cantorum;

Ad Solem; Hallé Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder

Hallé © CDHLL7542 (70' • DDD • T)

Recorded live at The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, March 29, 2014 and in rehearsal



'Steer for the deep waters only', exhorts the poet in the last movement ('The

Explorers') of *A Sea Symphony*, and that's precisely what Sir Mark Elder and his intrepid Hallé forces do here. Make no mistake, Elder presides over a majestic performance, brimful of lofty spectacle, abundant temperament and stunning accomplishment. In both outer movements especially the towering climaxes are built and resolved with unassailable mastery – and I don't think I've ever been more aware just of how touchingly the slow movement's coda foreshadows its counterpart in *A London Symphony*. Some might conceivably crave fractionally greater bite and thrust in the *scherzo*, but the gloriously ambitious finale is held together with effortless authority, those sublimely contemplative and illimitably rapt closing pages as full of questing wonder as I can ever recall.

As for the soloists, baritone Roderick Williams is on customarily refulgent and

intelligent form; soprano Katherine Broderick, too, sings with heaps of passion and drama, her thrilling top B towards the end of the first movement riding the massive swell in a way that even recalls Dame Isobel Baillie on Boult's classic (and still unassailable) 1953 Decca recording. The superbly honed choral and orchestral contribution surely testifies to many hours of painstaking preparation, and Steve Portnoi's Bridgewater Hall production (taken from a combination of rehearsals and a concert in March 2014) accommodates the intrepidly wide range of dynamic with ease.

Borne as it is on virtually as irresistible a symphonic current as the mono Boult, Handley (EMI, 2/89) and Haitink (1/90), Elder's is the most satisfying *Sea Symphony* I've encountered in many a moon, and no one collecting his RVW symphony cycle with the Hallé need have any qualms acquiring it. **Andrew Achenbach**

Selected comparison:

LPO, Boult (DECC) 473 241-2DC5

Wennäkoski

Soie°. Hava. Amor omnia

°**Kersten McCall** // **Finnish Radio Symphony**

Orchestra / Dima Slobodeniouk

Ondine © ODE1259-2 (55' • DDD)

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Lotta Wennäkoski has made it easy for people who want to listen properly to her beautiful music. The three movements of her flute concerto are named in French (presumably as the Finnish words don't fit and the English ones are too prosaic): 'Voile' (sail), 'Lin gros' (rough linen) and 'Soie' (silk). The three movements, for all their individuality, are wonderfully representative of those three textures.

Wennäkoski gets to the 'light, translucent billowing fabric' of 'Voile' with intensely detailed scoring and a large orchestra as if viewed from the wrong end of a telescope in its focus yet often incredibly spare and controlled. Now and then the ensemble collapses into a junction as if a ripping gust has caught it like a loose jib. There's a physicality to the music, as in 'Lin gros', when the orchestra suddenly leaps out of its background role into a snarling confrontation. 'Soie' is full of tiny detail, rippling through the orchestra from the soloist's keys – the flute's notes always about wind, never about accommodating a musical idea that could have been realised elsewhere.

To my ears there's more needless gesture and not the same level of distilled craft in *Hava*, a 'fast texture piece' that's not invested with quite enough momentum to maintain the motion, despite some alluring passages. It can be hard to get a handle on the suite *Amor omnia*, compiled by Wennäkoski from her full-length score to Konrad Tallroth's tragic-romantic silent film, without the accompanying pictures – which might explain the sense of undertow that seems to uncannily stalk the music, even in silence. There's a consistent exploration of orchestral light, translucence and patience (shades of Kaija Saariaho), while Wennäkoski certainly has a penchant for the sudden grand gesture (shades of Magnus Lindberg). Plenty of evidence why this composer has long been considered 'one to watch' in Finland. **Andrew Mellor**

'Nordic Sound'

Borup-Jørgensen Sommasvit, Op 24
Christensen Descant Recorder Concerto,
 'Nordic Summer Scherzo' **Clausen** Recorder
 Concertino **Gudmundsen-Holmgreen** Music
 for 13 Strings **Rasmussen** Winter Echoes^a
Sørensen Whispering^a
Michala Petri rec
Lapland Chamber Orchestra / Clemens Schuldt
 OUR Recordings 6 220613 (69' • DDD/DSD)

'Danish & Faroese Recorder Concertos'

Gudmundsen-Holmgreen Chacun Son Son
Koppel Moonchild's Dream
Rasmussen Territorial Songs
Michala Petri rec **Aalborg Symphony**
Orchestra / Henrik Vagn Christensen
 OUR Recordings 6 220609 (57' • DDD/DSD)



These latest releases from OUR Recordings, the label Michala Petri founded a decade ago, reaffirm the breadth of the contemporary recorder repertoire. 'Nordic Sound' came together as a memorial tribute to Danish composer Axel Borup-Jørgensen, represented here by his suite for strings inspired by Swedish lake-land area Sommen and typical in its oblique combining of abrasive energy with austere expectancy. Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen's *Music for 13 Strings* is appreciably more integrated as an overall entity, its trenchant contrapuntal writing redolent of Danish music from the late 1950s. That the other pieces feature recorder is about their only connection: as it title suggests, Bent Sørensen's *Whispering* is a resourceful study in 'sounds overheard', while Mogens Christensen's *Nordic Summer Scherzo* has the descant instrument in a wealth of deft and capricious exchanges; most distinctive is *Winter Echoes* by Sunleif Rasmussen, with recorder and strings as one in a sombre evocation of exquisite poise.

The other disc focuses on Danish and Faroese recorder concertos, this latter country again represented by Rasmussen – his *Territorial Songs* inspired by competing bird colonies in a sequence of five movements whose expressive central 'anticadenza' is framed by musical landscapes of mesmeric stillness and, in turn, by bell-permeated studies of surging impetus. Vastly different is *Moonchild's Dream*, Thomas Koppel's concerto, whose four movements outline a trajectory of hopes envisaged though ultimately denied in music that ranges from overt brutality to radiant pathos. In between is *Chacun Son Son*, Gudmundsen-Holmgreen's typically ingenious sequence of canonic exchanges in which various recorders are deployed according to the orchestral context – thus resulting in music that is ominous and sardonic by turns.

Both discs complement Petri's tellingly understated virtuosity with committed playing from the Lapland Chamber and Aalborg Symphony orchestras

respectively. Spacious sound and copious notes further enhance recordings that are provocative and diverting in equal measure. **Richard Whitehouse**

'Objects at an Exhibition'

'Exploring Science - Inspiring Music'
G Barry The One-Armed Pianist **B Guy**
 Mr Babbage is Coming to Dinner **Mayo**
 Supermarine **Molitor** 2TwoLO **Musgrave** Power
 Play **Sawer** Coachman **Chronos**
Aurora Orchestra / Nicholas Collon
 NMC 6 NMCD215 (55' • DDD)



It has been referred to as an imagining of *Pictures at an Exhibition* for the 21st century, but 'Objects...' also has the specific purpose of raising the profile of contemporary music in the UK by commissioning six composers on the basis of exhibits at London's Science Museum. Thea Musgrave takes the opulent Energy Hall with its pioneering steam engines as starting point for a lithe study in textural interplay, then Christopher Mayo deploys cello and double bass with four samplers for a portrait of RJ Mitchell (designer of the Spitfire) in which the visceral sound of aeroplane engines is offset by a plangent string dialogue.

The presence of 2LO (the first BBC transmitter) and associated archive recordings are behind Claudia Molitor's oblique synthesis of sound sources, whereas David Sawer takes that of the York Mail Coach for an eventful piece with flugelhorn evocatively to the fore. A pianist's prosthetic limb is the unlikely source for Gerald Barry's teasing study in intervallic change, while Barry Guy closes the sequence with a homage to Charles Babbage's Difference Engine via a graphic score in which improvisation gives rise to music where dexterity and velocity are as one.

Throughout this diverse while cohesive miscellany, the Aurora Orchestra respond with keen virtuosity to Nicholas Collon's alert direction. Vividly recorded, with booklet-notes providing ample context, it is more than just a memento of the live presentation at the Science Museum this October, which promises to be a watershed in the evolution of site-specific performance. **Richard Whitehouse**

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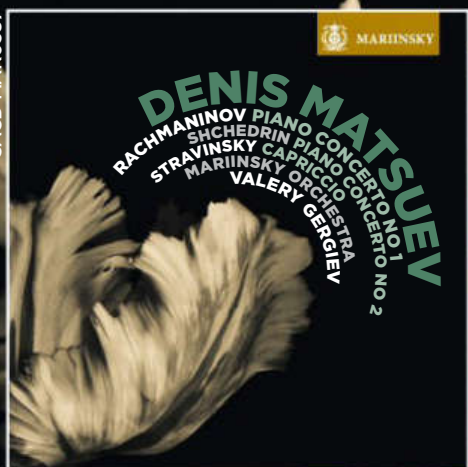
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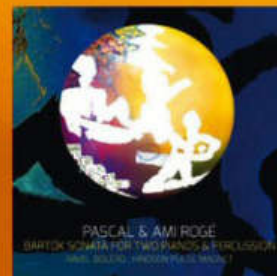
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Anders and Benjamin Koppel: the saxophonist plays his father's music on a new disc from Dacapo

'We can still use old forms to make new music.' Four decades after Penderecki issued this provocation to the European avant-garde, the notion of embodying the past within the context of the present has become a commonplace in Western music such that none of the composers featured here is notable for 'what' it is they do so much as for 'how' they go about doing it.

Chances are readers will have encountered the music of **Karol Beffa** (b1973) through his numerous film scores rather than his concert output, yet this latter is substantial and, while not notably individual, consistent in its austere harmonies and lambent string textures. That much is evident from the works here (written between 1999 and 2013) – taking in the sombre Romanticism of the Viola Concerto and the wistful pastorate of the Harp Concerto, which latter instrument informs the intensifying then subsiding motion of *Dédale*. Most telling is the hypnotic poise in four settings of St John on the Cross in the song-cycle *Nuit obscure*; while two pieces with piano, the Schnittke-like stylistic play of *Dark* and Silvestrov-like transcendence of *Rainbow*, frame a disc on which Johan Farjot draws some exquisite playing from Ensemble Contraste.

Whereas Beffa deploys Baroque stylisms as one aspect of his compositional armoury, **Sebastian Krajewski** (b1975) absorbs it whole in his two Concerti grossi (2000 and 2006) – the relatively gentle deviations of the former becoming audibly more disruptive

in the latter. Finer, though, is the Oboe Concerto (2005), its three movements paying tribute to Vaughan Williams via a lucid and resourceful overhaul of the Classical trajectory to which Marek Roszkowski does full justice, while *Seven Fragments after Michael Ende* (2004) rounds off the selection in a mood of elusive understatement. The various Polish forces play with spirit and refinement, and this disc is further enhanced by Jacek Dehnel's essay *The Dubrovnik Experiment*, included here as an unexpected while thought provoking 'literary supplement'.

The oboe as a conveyor of stylistic versatility is confirmed by the four pieces on the anthology *Meditation*. Henri Sauguet's *Garden Concerto* (1970) might almost be thought a precursor to that by Krajewski in its whimsical yet never wantonly escapist neo-classicism, enhanced by the deftest use of percussion, behind which can be sensed an unease the more troubling for its intangibility. The *Notturmo* (2001) by Nicolas Bacri typifies this composer's continuation of a Honegger lineage in French music, whereas Keith Jarrett's *Adagio* (1994) similarly pays homage to the American tradition exemplified by Barber. More arresting is Anders Hillborg's *Méditations sur Pétrarque* (2009), where a variety of string instruments enfolds the soloist in a translucent 'song' to which oboist Lajos Lencsés does ample justice.



Few present-day composers can rival **Anders Koppel** (b1947) for stylistic

inclusivity, underlined by a disc featuring two of his concertos. That for recorder and saxophone (2010) takes in the widest timbral variety – juxtaposing the recorder's four main incarnations against the saxophone's alto guise – across three movements whose orthodox trajectory is enlivened by the expressive nuance of the *Larghetto* and the keenly deflected rhetoric of the finale. If the Triple Concerto (2009) is potentially even more absorbing, the relatively flaccid progress of its second and final movement means momentum is lost well before the close. Nor is the ample duration (nearly 40 minutes) of both pieces ideally sustained, for all that the presence of such artists as Michala Petri and Benjamin Koppel is an undoubted stimulus to listening.

Finally to **Aulis Sallinen** (b1935) and an integral recording of his complete (to date) *Chamber Music* series as encompasses the second half of his composing and includes several of his most characteristic works. All eight are centred on string orchestra with all but the first featuring *concertante* instruments that articulate the character of the piece in question. If the third, in its capricious evocation of 'Don Juanquixote', is still the most arresting (belying the earnestness so often associated with this composer), the sixth and seventh probe the character of string quartet and wind quintet, while the eighth combines cello and strings with hauntingly expressive results. Assured playing by the Jyväskylä Sinfonia, with soloists such as the cellist Arto Noras and pianist Ralf Gothóni, and a fine commemoration of Sallinen's 80th birthday.

These new releases prompt the thought that, 40 years on from Penderecki's dictum, 'old forms' and 'new music' have again secured a productive synthesis. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

- | | |
|---|--|
|  | Beffa Into the dark Beffa, Deshayes; Ens Contraste / Farjot
Aparté (P) AP108 |
|  | Krajewski Ob. Conc. Concerti grossi Roszkowski; Polish RSO
Dux (P) DUX1124 |
|  | Various Cpsrs Meditation Lencsés
Bayer (P) BR100315 |
|  | A Koppel Concertos A Koppel, Petri et al; Odense SO / Christensen Dacapo (P) 6 220633 |
|  | Sallinen Chamber Music I-VIII Gothóni et al; Jyväskylä Sinf Online (M) 2 ODE1256-2D |

Schumann's Dichterliebe

James Jolly meets tenor **James Gilchrist** to discuss the 16 songs comprising 'A Poet's Love'

The year 1840, often called the Liederjahr ('Year of Song'), saw an extraordinary outpouring of music from Robert Schumann, almost all of it song – no fewer than 138 in total. And standing out, head and shoulders above this expanse of miniatures, are five song-cycles, three of which the tenor James Gilchrist has recorded for Linn: both of the *Liederkreis* cycles as well as *Dichterliebe*, with his regular piano partner Anna Tilbrook. So, armed with a score of *Dichterliebe*, I went to visit him at his home in Cheltenham.

Dichterliebe was published by CF Peters, and the elegant frontispiece carries a dedication to 'Frau Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient', the celebrated soprano who would later create the Wagner roles of Senta (*The Flying Dutchman*) and Venus in *Tannhäuser*. Are there any implications, I wondered, for male singers, in terms of transpositions?

'Generally, music written for a soprano works perfectly for the tenor,' explains James Gilchrist. 'And interestingly, mezzos and baritones often don't transpose the songs in *Dichterliebe* because the cycle's tessitura doesn't present too many problems. If I look at the original keys of Schubert and Schumann, I notice that the vocal tessitura is very different. I'd say that Schubert has a lighter, higher tenor voice and Schumann much more of a "bari-tenor".'

When Schumann wrote *Dichterliebe* ('A Poet's Love') he was separated from his beloved Clara. 'They had some really, really difficult years behind them when Clara's father was being more than awkward – he was really determined to separate them,' explains Gilchrist. 'Although *Dichterliebe* is a celebration of their happiness and their togetherness, it's also a remembrance of the enormously difficult time they'd had when perhaps they both thought this wasn't going to work and they wouldn't be allowed to be together.'

Dichterliebe sets 16 poems by Heinrich Heine, published three years earlier. Schumann was acquainted with the poet, but didn't know him well. 'Both Robert and Clara met Heine at some point: Clara in Paris in 1839 and Robert a bit earlier in Munich. I find that rather fascinating as Robert usually set poetry of people he knew well.'

The cycle starts in an astonishing way – not so much starts as seems to continue a phrase that has been playing silently off-stage. 'If you read the poem, it's a sunny enjoyment of springtime – that's what it's saying. "My heart and my love life is in tune with the world around me and everything's fine" –



From bile to nostalgia: Gilchrist and Tilbrook probe *Dichterliebe*'s myriad emotions

yet Schumann absolutely does not set it like that. He sets it in this faltering style, particularly so harmonically.' Gilchrist points to the opening bars. 'He starts it with a discord and you're really unsure for the first bar or two which key you're in – it certainly hints at a minor tonality with all those E sharps.'

Gilchrist likes to see the 16 songs in four groups of four, and each of these quarters has a different way of introducing the voice, something very evident when you compare the second and third quarters. In the fifth song 'Ich will meine Seele tauchen' and the one that follows 'Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome', the voice actually comes in before the piano; in the seventh, the voice joins very soon after the piano and in the eighth, they start together. But come the third quarter, the piano tends to have a prelude. 'I sometimes joke that *Dichterliebe* is a piano work with optional vocal accompaniment,' comments Gilchrist.

Schumann's cycle often leaves songs tonally unresolved, or the tonality seems to lean towards the next song as if seeking some balance. Though we're supposed to be looking at the score, it's tempting to reflect on what's *not* on the page – the gaps between these 16 songs. How easy are they to gauge? 'It is difficult,' Gilchrist concedes, 'and that's particularly so



The historical view

Robert Schumann
Letter to Clara (February 1840)

'Oh my Clara, what bliss it is to write songs. I can't tell you how easy it has become for me...it is music of an entirely different kind which doesn't have to pass through the fingers...I should like to sing myself to death, like a nightingale!'

Gerald Moore
Poet's Love: The Songs and Cycles of Schumann (Taplinger, 1981)

'The inspired peroration to *Dichterliebe* is not imbued with tear-choked retrospection... No longer a reflection of self-pity, it is a new structure; there are moments of nostalgia, but they are gentle with a fragile beauty.'

Charles Rosen
The Romantic Generation (Harvard University Press, 1995)

'It is clear for Schumann that ['Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen, No 13] could not exist outside the cycle. It is, in its angular and banal insistence, a deliberately bad song, but magnificent in its place.'

when it comes to recording because in a performance you're there and you have to go from the beginning to the end and you can really judge the gaps as they come. I'm always fascinated that each time Anna and I perform this piece – and we've done it a great number of times – the gaps will be very different from performance to performance.'

The most famous song in the cycle is 'Ich grolle nicht' (No 7). 'It goes down to a bottom C and quite a lot of it lies pretty low,' Gilchrist notes. 'I feel that he's deliberately written it at the bottom of the register so it's weak. The poem says "I'm going to bear this grief", as it were, and it underpins how he's not being true to himself. Schumann takes it down, *forte*, to a bottom C, which is going to be weak, even for a soprano.'

If the first four songs of the cycle maintain a tone of happiness filtered through memory, the second four see despair setting in – in 'Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome', as Gilchrist points out, Schumann even changes Heine's words. "Im Rhein, im *schönen* ['beautiful'] Strome" is what Heine wrote, as set delightfully by Liszt, but Schumann's has "*heiligen* ['holy'] Strome", and this more serious, darker word chimes with the bell-like motifs and gothic architecture of the song – stamping out all hope. As time goes by, my interpretation of this song gets darker and darker.'

The third quarter 'is bitterness and bile' in Gilchrist's view. "Hör ich das Liedchen klingen" [No 10] has the voice entering late in the song, and the prelude ushers in Schumann's characteristic rhythmic ambiguity. The haunting melody is delayed by a semiquaver. In the postlude, the cascading echoes of melody are further displaced. This is entirely a piano song. The song she used to sing echoes around him. He joins, speaks and fades into the melody of the piano. In the postlude we get an impassioned cascade of "Clara themes": 'This motif – at its simplest – uses the C [L] A [R] A of her name and, here, interposes B and G sharp between.

'Dichterliebe celebrates Robert and Clara's happiness but also remembers an enormously difficult time for them'

'In the fourth quarter, we're in a totally unreal place,' says Gilchrist. 'All of a sudden there's mention of dreams and of fairy-tale land and I don't think it's an accident.' The long postlude that concludes 'Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen' [No 12], ends on the same note that opens song No 13, 'Ich hab' im Traum geweinet', which begins with 'the voice totally alone – and that's quite unusual in song repertoire of the period. I can't think of many songs that do that. The score is so full of empty space. It's really arresting and quite unnerving.'

The final song, as Gilchrist points out, 'directly addresses the listener. The voice finishes with quite a short note but the piano is left, with the same chord, just ringing on and you wonder what's happening. Then comes this unusual cadence into some sort of luscious harmony as we remember the melody we heard before and which becomes more drawn out as if in a memory. I think we are feeling some connection to Clara – the wistfulness is there but the melody seems to be joining them together. This ending brings the cycle to a close and leaves us almost as we began – in a wistful remembrance of the happy times that went before.'

► To read Gramophone's review of James Gilchrist and Anna Tilbrook's recording of Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, Op 48, on Linn, turn to page 99

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Chamber



David Threasher welcomes period-instrument piano trios on Flora:

'An hour spent with Haydn is never wasted, especially in such convivial company as this.' ► REVIEW ON PAGE 73



Andrew Mellor on a new disc of Baltic Reflections on Delphian:

'Full marks for originality of concept and for execution, which has all this ensemble's trademark style' ► REVIEW ON PAGE 81

JS Bach • Handel • D Scarlatti

JS Bach Three Viola da gamba Sonatas, BWV1027-29 **Handel** Violin Sonata, HWV264b^a **D Scarlatti** Sonata, Kk90^a
Stephen Isserlis, ^a**Robin Michael** vcs
Richard Egarr hpd
Hyperion Ⓢ CDA68045 (60' • DDD)



None of these pieces was written for cello and harpsichord, and at no stage does that

matter one bit. Bach's sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord may not have been conceived for that combination but they are such sublime creations that the identity of the instruments is perhaps the last thing that should worry us. Rather, it is the performers' musicianship that counts, and in this case that is of high quality indeed.

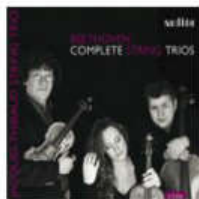
Steven Isserlis makes no attempt to make his cello imitate the wispy resonance of the gamba, instead claiming the music for his instrument with vigorously articulated lines, robust technical athleticism and ravishing *cantabile*. Indeed, it is this wondrous singing quality – which never loses its bearing and employs vibrato only as one of its discreet expressive elements – that stands out in these performances, its presence felt above all in the slow movements, of course, but also constantly governing the sense of line in busier ones. Also telling is the profound awareness of architecture and the inter-relationship of movements, for instance in the gathering joy with which the finale of BWV1027 picks us off the floor following the sudden shaft of desolation that has ended the preceding *Andante* (astutely likened by Isserlis to 'Es ist vollbracht' from the *St John Passion*). In short, these are full-blooded but sensitive readings which, far from being contrary to Bach's spirit, seem rather to magnify it.

Isserlis is excellently partnered at every turn by Richard Egarr's bustling harpsichord-playing, though I would have liked a greater presence for it in the balance

to give more definition to the unsupported bass-line. In the two non-Bach items – sonatas probably originally conceived for violin and continuo by Handel and Scarlatti (the latter working up a fiery head) – the balance works better, with Egarr typically inventive and Robin Michael's lightly drawn doubling of the bass adding just enough weight without drawing attention to itself. Otherwise, they show the same quality in performance as the Bach – namely first-class. **Lindsay Kemp**

Beethoven

'Complete String Trios'
Serenade, Op 8. String Trios – Op 3; Op 9
Jacques Thibaud String Trio
Audite Ⓢ ② AUDITE23 430 (146' • DDD)



A new set of Beethoven's string trios is always a welcome event, and this one, by a group named after one of the greatest of all chamber musicians, is a useful addition to the catalogue. In the Op 8 Serenade the Jacques Thibaud Trio capture well the outdoorsy character, particularly in the uproarious March, while the voicing in the second movement is judged to a nicety. By comparison, the Leopold and Zimmermann trios are more unbuttoned still.

I like, too, the tempo the Thibaud Trio choose for the first movement of Op 3, which is faster than some (though Trio Zimmermann are fleetier still), giving Beethoven's abrupt changes of mood a sense of complete inevitability. They capture the changeability – and sheer sparkle – of the opening *Allegro* of Op 9 No 1 very well, relishing the drama of the development section. But turn to Trio Zimmermann and you get playing that is even more reactive, particularly effective in their ability to fine down their tone to near-inaudibility. In the *Scherzo* I found the Leopold Trio's more refined tone particularly alluring, the new version sounding a touch thick-toned by comparison. And in the *Presto* finale it's

the Trio Zimmermann who really fly, combining precision engineering with a glorious airiness that the Thibaud can't quite match.

Beethoven ends the last of the Op 9 trios with another *Presto*, though utterly different in mood than that of the G major and given with due drama by the Thibaud Trio. In between is a warm reading of the D major Trio, the group revealing the first movement's conviviality and the touching pathos of the *Andante*. Audite has given them a suitably naturalistic recording. If Trio Zimmermann is too extreme for your tastes, the Thibaud Trio may well appeal.

Harriet Smith

String Trios – selected comparisons:

Leopold Trio (1/99) (HYPE) CDD22069

Trio Zimmermann (3/12, 8/14) (BIS)

BIS-SACD1857, BIS2087

Coleridge-Taylor • Somervell • Walthew

'British Clarinet Quintets'
Coleridge-Taylor Clarinet Quintet, Op 10
Somervell Clarinet Quintet
Walthew A Short Quintet
Stephan Siegenthaler c **Leipzig Quartet**
CPO Ⓢ CPO777 905-2 (73' • DDD)



Best known as the author of several song-cycles, hence the soubriquet of

'the English Schumann', Arthur Somervell was nevertheless a thoroughly competent composer of instrumental works, among which is his delightfully lyrical post-Brahmsian Clarinet Quintet of 1913. This was recorded 36 years ago by Thea King and the Aeolian Quartet (Hyperion, 3/81, 5/03), so it is good to have a new interpretation by the clarinetist Stephan Siegenthaler and the Leipzig Quartet. They give space to Somervell's natural gift for song-like melody in the first and last movements, and lend pathos to the third movement, a touching 'Lament' in the unconventional guise of a theme and variations.



Marc-André Hamelin and the Pacifica Quartet, recording works by Leo Ornstein for their new Hyperion disc, review on page 73

The ensemble also show great sympathy for Coleridge-Taylor's prodigious Quintet in F sharp minor, composed when he was only 20. Redolent of Dvořák's penchant for modal harmony, the work is nevertheless an impressive and individual essay showing, for one so young, a mature understanding of the apparatus and a feeling for form to rival any of his native contemporaries (save perhaps William Hurlstone). How ahead, for example, he was of his RCM confrère, Vaughan Williams, who was three years his elder! There are three other relatively recent recordings – on Koch (10/92 – nla), Centaur (1/07) and Hyperion (11/07) – but this reading has a lightness, felicity and verve which is enhanced by the quartet's balance, careful intonation and a rhythmical aplomb in the metrically shifting sands of the *Scherzo*.

Left unpublished until 2000, Richard Walthew's one-movement *Short Quintet* in E flat dates from 1917-18 and builds on the through-composed concept of his most successful chamber work, the *Phantasy Quintet* of 1912. Adopting a tripartite scheme, with a central (and deeply poetic) slow movement, the work is affectingly nostalgic and introspective, though not without its outbursts of passion.

Jeremy Dibble

Handel • Haym

Handel Trio Sonatas – Op 2 No 5 HWV390a; HWV392. Amadigi di Gaula – Ballo di poston e pastorelle. Admeto – A languir ed a penar. Ottone – Ah! tu non sai. Tolomeo – Torni omai la pace all'alma **Haym** Trio Sonatas, Op 1 – No 1; No 3; No 4

L'Aura Rilucente

Ambronay © AMY304 (55' • DDD)



Nicola Francesco Haym (1678-1729) is not a totally obscure figure. Although this release may well be the first to add these three trio sonatas for strings to the slim count of recorded works by him, he is a name familiar to Handel aficionados as one of the great man's favourite librettists. A good one, too, for he lent his literary talents to such high-quality pieces as *Giulio Cesare*, *Tamerlano* and *Rodelinda*. His Op 1 Trios were published in 1701, shortly after his arrival in London from Rome, where he had been a cellist in Corelli's orchestra. Inevitably they are firmly in the Corellian mould, yet, despite some awkwardnesses, are attractive and individual enough to merit this little outing. *L'Aura Rilucente*

choose to interleave them with trio sonatas from Handel's Op 2, which are both richer and longer, and, in an imaginative attempt to link the two composers in this instrumental chamber context, with arrangements of three arias from operas on which they collaborated.

So we know that this young Italian group, making their recording debut here, can plan a satisfying and original programme. Their playing is stylish and accurate too, full of smartly observed articulation, phrasing and ornamentation. Less pleasing, however, is a nagging meanness to the sound they make. One longs for them to find greater richness in the string tone, relish the music's lyricism more and project more urgent energy and momentum. Gaps between movements are often enervatingly overlong (editor to blame?) and slow movements can also lose their direction sometimes. This is a shame, as faster movements do not suffer so, and there are places (for instance the *Adagio* of Haym's Op 1 No 4) where an interesting sense of atmosphere is created. The inclusion of a harp in the continuo, though effective here, is elsewhere a mixed blessing. A group with something to say, then, but someone needs to encourage them out of their shells more. **Lindsay Kemp**



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Haydn

Piano Trios – HobXV/10; HobXV/18;
HobXV/21; HobXV/23

François Fernandez *vn* Rainer Zipperling *vc*

Boyan Vodenitcharov *fp*

Flora Ⓢ FLORA0805 (62' • DDD)



Recorded the better part of 10 years ago, here's a disc of four Haydn piano trios,

none of them perhaps first choices in terms of popularity, played on period instruments. Not, perhaps, the most enticing prospect on paper; but such is the glory of this music, and such is the palpable identification of these players with Haydn and the evident rapport between them, that the disc is a pleasure from start to finish.

The alertness and playfulness at the outset of the opening A major Trio (No 18) finds an ideal foil in the veiled *tinta* of its A minor slow movement, the tone warming again for its major-key sections and the rumbustious finale; then the change of tone between that and the austere opening of the D minor work (No 23) makes one wonder what these musicians might make of a *Ghost* Trio. Tempi are well chosen and intonation – with only a bare minimum of vibrato – is near ideal. More importantly, though, balance between the three instruments is beautifully judged, allowing each its moment in the spotlight, the piano (a modern copy of a 1785 Stein) never overpowering the string instruments and, crucially, allowing the cello full voice, dispelling the lazy notion that it is merely a secondary voice in this music.

The rustic conviviality of the C major Trio (No 21) is lustily conveyed with cheeky *portamentos*, the two-movement E flat (No 10) with a driving seriousness of intent in the *Allegro moderato* that is gleefully subverted in the *Presto* rondo. An hour spent with Haydn is never wasted, especially in such convivial company as this. **David Threasher**

Matteis • Barsanti

'Most Ravishing Things'

Barsanti Clout the cauldron. Thro' the wood, laddie Matteis The Books of Ayres – selection
Theatrum Affectuum

Aeolus Ⓢ AE10226 (73' • DDD/DSD)



Thanks to the admiring accounts of the likes of John Evelyn and Roger North, we know a fair

bit about 'stupendous' Nicola Matteis, the Italian violinist who came to London in 1670 and showed the English a thing or two about violin-playing with recitals that had his audiences 'held by the ears'. And his music, which consists mainly of four books of attractive and playful 'Ayres for the Violin' published between 1676 and 1685, has attracted some attention in recent years. Various of the preludes, dances, grounds, mini-fugues and other pieces for violin and continuo – some Italianate, some French-sounding, few longer than five minutes, from which Matteis apparently liked to make up suites or sonatas in performance – have turned up in several anthologies, while this is the fourth album to make them its focus, following those by the Palladian Ensemble (Linn, 9/00), Gli Incogniti (ZZT, 4/10) and Hélène Schmitt (Alpha).

Theatrum Affectuum, based in Holland, use recorder, violin or both on the top lines (Matteis added second treble parts in later editions) with a continuo section of cello, theorbo/guitar and keyboards. Their performances are stylish, rich-toned and nimble; and, like most Matteis interpreters, they play with the material a bit, adding ornaments and repeats and sexing up the scoring here and there. Perhaps not much more than that is required, though if you want a touch more fantasy and fun you may prefer the lithe violin of Gli Incogniti's Amandine Beyer or the quick, bright brilliance of Rachel Podger and recorder player Pamela Thorby for the Palladians. Like the Palladians, Theatrum Affectuum throw in some Scottish tunes as published by Francesco Barsanti in 1742, though they keep the balance much more firmly in Matteis's favour. Four discs of Matteis may well be more than you'll ever need but each of the above will give pleasure enough. **Lindsay Kemp**

Ornstein

Piano Quintet, Op 92^a.

String Quartet No 2, Op 99

^aMarc-André Hamelin *pf* Pacifica Quartet

Hyperion Ⓢ CDA68084 (73' • DDD)



Having given us a solo Ornstein disc back in 2002 (10/02), Marc-André Hamelin here

offers the hypertrophic Piano Quintet. Composed in 1927, by which time the Russian-born, American-resident maverick had got his wild oats well and truly out of his system (as in the pre-war *Suicide in an Aeroplane*), this is a glorious confection of Stravinsky, Ravel, Rachmaninov and East

IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

• BIS completions

Late August saw **Ronald Brautigam** (below) putting the final touches to two series for the Swedish label. He took the *Diabelli* Variations into Österåker Church, Åkersberga, Sweden to complete his period-instrument Beethoven cycle. In the Kammermusiksaal of German Radio in Cologne, meanwhile, he has recorded Mozart's first four piano concertos as the final instalment of his survey with the **Kölner Akademie** under **Michael Alexander Willens**, again on period instruments.



Also for BIS, the **BBC National Orchestra of Wales** and **Kriss Russman** have recorded a disc of music by George Butterworth in BBC Hoddinott Hall, part of Cardiff's Wales Millennium Centre. The repertoire includes the *Six Songs from A Shropshire Lad* (with the British bass-baritone **James Rutherford**) as well as the *Fantasia* for orchestra and *Suite for Strings*, respectively completed and arranged by Russman himself.

• String concertos from Ondine

There are two new discs of major new concerto recordings to look forward to from the Finnish label. In August, **Anssi Karttunen** joined the **Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra** and conductor **Hannu Lintu** to set down Magnus Lindberg's Cello Concerto No 2 – the first recording of the work. In the same sessions, Lintu and his orchestra recorded one of the couplings, *Era*; the other work on the disc, *Al largo* is being recorded at the end of October. Also in October, **Christian Tetzlaff** goes into the studio with **John Storgårds** and the **Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra** to record a programme of Czech music for violin and orchestra. The main work is Dvořák's Violin Concerto, which will be coupled with the same composer's *Romance* Op 11, and the *Fantasy* Op 24 by his son-in-law Josef Suk. Both discs are due for release in the spring.

European folk idioms that almost makes up in enthusiasm what it so conspicuously lacks in discipline. Evidently counterpoint was on the list of theoretical subjects Ornstein had no time for. As a result, when he adds super-luxuriant harmonies and pianistic cascades to the mix, he merely reinforces the impression of a massively talented student rather than a mature composer (for a counter-example, compare the similarly monumental but far more carefully crafted Taneyev Quintet). Pianistically Hamelin has a considerable edge over his fellow Ornsteinian Janet Weber, as does Hyperion's recording quality over the boominess of its New World rival.

In the Quintet's world of elementary melody and accompaniment, amplified by virtuoso texture and spiced by additive-rhythm ostinato, the piano is king. The Pacifica Quartet have more chance to show their mettle in the less extravagant Second String Quartet, probably composed shortly after the Quintet (most Ornstein dates are more or less conjectural). Once again, the influence of Ravel is to the fore, and once again the comparison shows up Ornstein's essential naivety – an engaging or frustrating quality, according to taste. Both pieces are excellent examples of how far a composer can go on intuition, energy and talent alone, which is to say a good deal further than those lacking such qualities but nowhere near as far as those who take the trouble to learn their craft thoroughly. **David Fanning**

Piano Quintet – comparative version:

Lydian Qt, Weber (NEW) NW80509-2

Reynolds

'Complete Cello Works'

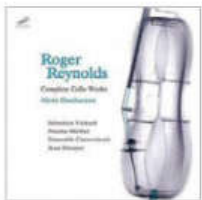
Thoughts, Places, Dreams^a. Colombi Daydream. Focus a beam, emptied of thinking, outward.... imAge/cello. imAge/cello. Process and Passion^b. A Crimson Path^c

Alexis Descharmes *vc* ^bNicholas Miribel *vn*

^bFrédéric Voisin *elec* ^cSébastien Vichard *pf*

^aEnsemble Court-Circuit / Jean Deroyer

Mode \oplus ② MODE277/8 (88' • DDD)



It began in West Yorkshire, back in the earliest days of the Huddersfield

Contemporary Music Festival, when California-based composer Roger Reynolds heard the Arditti Quartet play Xenakis and fell immediately under the spell of Rohan de Saram, the group's then cellist. And the piece Reynolds wrote for de Saram, *Focus a beam, emptied of thinking, outward...* (1989), was to evolve into an immersive séance on words by the poet James Merrill.

Quarter of a century later, as played by Alexis Descharmes, the piece remains fresh-minted but also thrillingly open-ended – a structure that is always bigger than your attempts to contain it. If all this speak of beams focusing – and, what's more, being emptied of thinking – puts you in mind of quack New Age therapies, fear not. The long-bowed slumber of the beginning, throbbing tones that imply a harmonic context which Reynolds at first keeps tantalisingly under wraps, gradually gathers pace – the music's rhythmic life dragging its understated harmonic beginnings along for the ride.

Compared to the radical surgery Reynolds performed on percussion technique during his percussion ensemble epic *Sanctuary* (1/12), his view of cello technique is more conformist. But Reynolds remains forever disarming. What other composer could have arrived at a score like *Thoughts, Places, Dreams* for cello and chamber orchestra (2013), where textures are flicked on and off – as if the piece were a continuum but with layers that are being constantly dimmed or snuffed out altogether.

Reynolds himself appears reading sections of text that inspired his pieces. And the rich, mellifluous tones of his speaking voice hold some clue to this music. *A Crimson Path* for cello and piano (2000-02) curves mysteriously against reality, thematic fragments and gestural utterances folding back in on themselves. *imAge/cello* and *imAge/cello* (both 2007) ladle sound out from the base-physics of the instrument: keening harmonics in the first piece leading to vicious strumming in the sequel. But, as in *Thoughts, Places, Dreams*, we never quite see the whole. Reynolds plants seeds in our memory, challenging us to apply our memories of what we think we heard earlier, or might have heard, against the music we're now hearing – which itself has already evaporated into the air. **Philip Clark**

Saint-Saëns

Bassoon Sonata, Op 168. Romances – Op 37; Op 67. Oboe Sonata, Op 166. Clarinet Sonata, Op 167. Caprice sur des airs danois et russes, Op 79

Akanè Makita *pf* Soloists of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome
Brilliant \oplus 95165 (67' • DDD)



(strangely, no sonatas for his own instruments, the piano and organ). Then

three small-scale sonatas appear unexpectedly in the same year (1921), one each for oboe, bassoon and clarinet. As the fine pianist on this welcome issue, Akanè Makita, observes, 'they hardly seem to be by the same composer as the sonatas for strings, the piano trios and quartets, and indeed the concertos and virtuoso works for violin and piano. Gone are the cascades of sounds...the endless development of subjects.' In addition, they famously take no account of any of the musical revolutions that had erupted in the previous decade or so. Saint-Saëns remained true to his credo of elegance, symmetry and form. The sonatas may lack depth but, interestingly, there are passages in these works that seem more personal and revealing than many of his earlier, more substantial compositions. Take the first movement of the Bassoon Sonata, the second of the Oboe Sonata (with its echoes of the 'Air du rossignol' from *Parysatis*) or the opening theme of the Clarinet Sonata, all played here with finesse and no little degree of charm by their respective soloists.

My favourite recording of these chamber works is by the Nash Ensemble (Hyperion, 7/05). This is on two discs and also has the Piano Quartet and Piano Quintet, though not the two Romances, for horn and flute. Hyperion also features the Tarantelle in A minor, Op 6, for flute, clarinet and piano. I think Brilliant Classics missed a trick by not adding this six-minute charmer to the running time of 66'54". The Henry Wood Hall offers an airier acoustic for Hyperion but otherwise there is, frankly, little to choose between the performances on either label. Your decision to invest in one of the other can confidently be determined by your repertoire needs. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Telemann

'The Saxon Alternative – Music for Wind Band' Concerto, TWV44/2. Overtures – TWV44/7; TWV44/14; TWV55/B3; TWV55/c3

Syrinx

Resonus \oplus RES10154 (62' • DDD)



These four overture-suites and one chamber concerto are pretty much what one

would expect from Telemann: amiable, urbane, expertly written and laced with the odd character piece to make you smile. What makes this release unusual, however, is that they are all for what Telemann might have called a Hautboisten Band, which is to say an ensemble of oboes and bassoons with continuo. Such groups were



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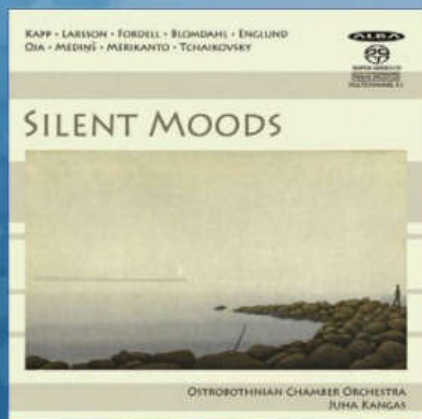
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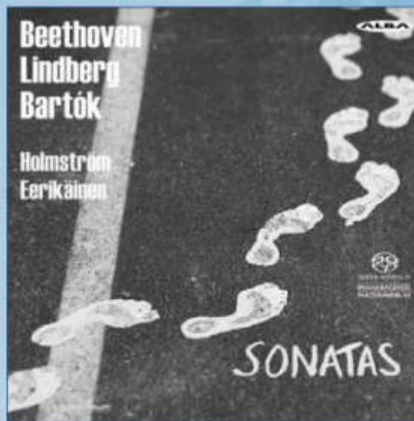
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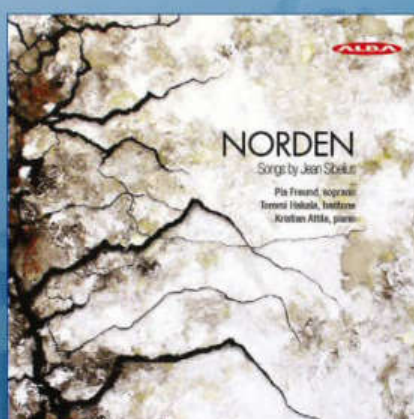


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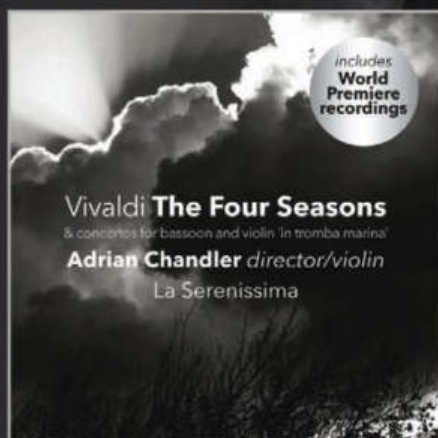
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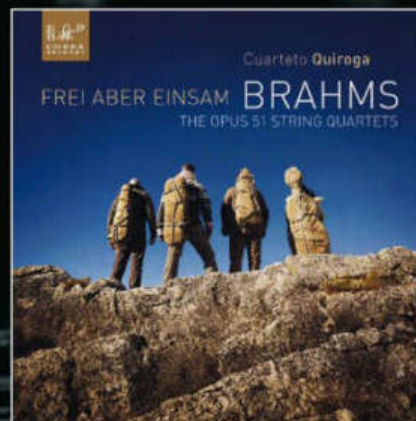
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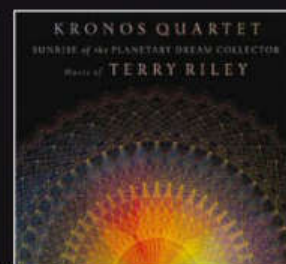
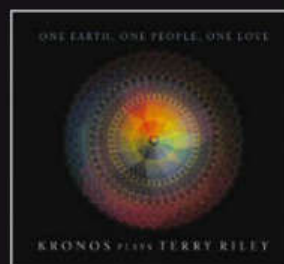
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TERRY RILEY

Pwyll ap Siôn listens to two multi-disc releases exploring the music of the maverick American composer, who turns 80 this year



The Kronos Quartet, who celebrate the music of Terry Riley in a major release on Nonesuch

Can you think of another living composer who has been saddled as much with the success of a single composition as Terry Riley with his *In C*? It has probably been performed and recorded more times than the rest of the composer's oeuvre put together; but Riley's music has moved on a lot since the heady days of the mid-1960s, as chronicled here in a set of recent recordings issued to mark his 80th birthday.

The good news is that the focus has been primarily on Riley's post-1980 output. During the 1970s the composer had evolved a unique improvisatory style through his study of North Indian raga. But a chance conversation with David Harrington, founder and leader of the Kronos Quartet, inspired Riley to embrace notated composition once more.

The result, as documented on the five-CD box-set **One Earth, One People, One Love**, is a collaboration that has spanned 35 years and almost 30 compositions for the quartet. As with all truly synergetic relationships, influence worked dynamically in both directions. For Kronos, collaborating with Riley took the performers away from the notes on the page to a much keener experience of sound itself. For Riley, it compelled him to take a step back from the moment of improvisation, re-evaluate his music and shape it into something far more concrete.

Of course, the two areas of composition and improvisation were not mutually

'Riley's music has moved on a lot since *In C* and the heady days of the mid-1960s'

exclusive, as witnessed in Riley's first exercise in the medium, *Sunrise of the Planetary Dream Collector* (1980). Its modular construction looks back to *In C* but the lines and shapes echo the composer's improvisational language. Dating from the same year, *G Song* comprises a series of variations on a descending ground bass which spiral outwards from a harmonic core in ever-widening circles of melodic figuration, only to arrive full circle at the end. It confirmed Harrington's view that Riley's musical DNA was predisposed towards quartet composition. But even the violinist could not have imagined what was to follow.

Almost 30 minutes in length, *Cadenza on the Night Plain* (1983) was Riley's first major attempt in the medium. It still ranks as one of his most compelling works. Riley decided to incorporate solo cadenza-like sections in four of the piece's 11 interlocking movements. It intensified his focus on each instrument's individual character and role within the ensemble and set the tone for *Salome Dances for Peace* (1985-86) – a vast, ambitious five-movement cycle lasting over two hours, which surely ranks as the composer's magnum opus. Epic in design and almost operatic in narrative sweep, Riley's

mythical tale inverts the traditional image of Salome by transforming the seductress into a modern-day peace envoy, returning to banish evil from the world.

Riley's trademark kernel-like repeated patterns are shaped into more immediately identifiable motifs and sustained across wider timespans here. Complex contrapuntal and polyrhythmic passages give way to delicate jazz and restrained hymn-like moments in a work that surpasses in stylistic range and expression anything that had been previously written by the composer in this medium.

Salome Dances for Peace marked another turning point. He looked to ways in which its sounds could be combined with other forces. *One Earth, One People, One Love* from the album 'Sun Rings' (2002) sets radiant string sonorities against a backdrop of extraterrestrial bleeps, squeaks and sounds. Meanwhile, *The Cusp of Magic* (2003) sees the Chinese pipa player Wu Man team up with Kronos in a captivating childhood suite that makes colourful use of percussion and toy instruments.

Riley's subject matter shifted from mythical story-telling to the portrayal of real-life events during the 1990s, bringing with it a sharper focus. 'Ascending the Heaven Ladder' from *Requiem for Adam* (1999) starts with the bare bones of a chord pattern, which returns in chilling hollowed-out form towards the end. *Lacrymosa – Remembering Kevin* (1998) evokes bittersweet memories through pop-ballad harmonies only to disintegrate at one point into atonal atrophy.

Only occasionally is Riley's music pulled under by dark waves of insecurity, however. He must be one of the 20th century's most positive composers. In **ZOFO Plays Terry Riley**, the prodigiously talented piano duo present Riley's music at its virtuoso best. Comprising pieces taken from the composer's *The Heaven Ladder, Book 5*, a couple of quartet rearrangements from Kronos's back catalogue and a mad *Rag* written especially for the duet, Zimmermann and Nakagoshi's thrilling playing combines rhythmic and dynamic power with moments of poetic poise and reflection, perfectly balancing the music's spiritual and corporeal dimensions. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



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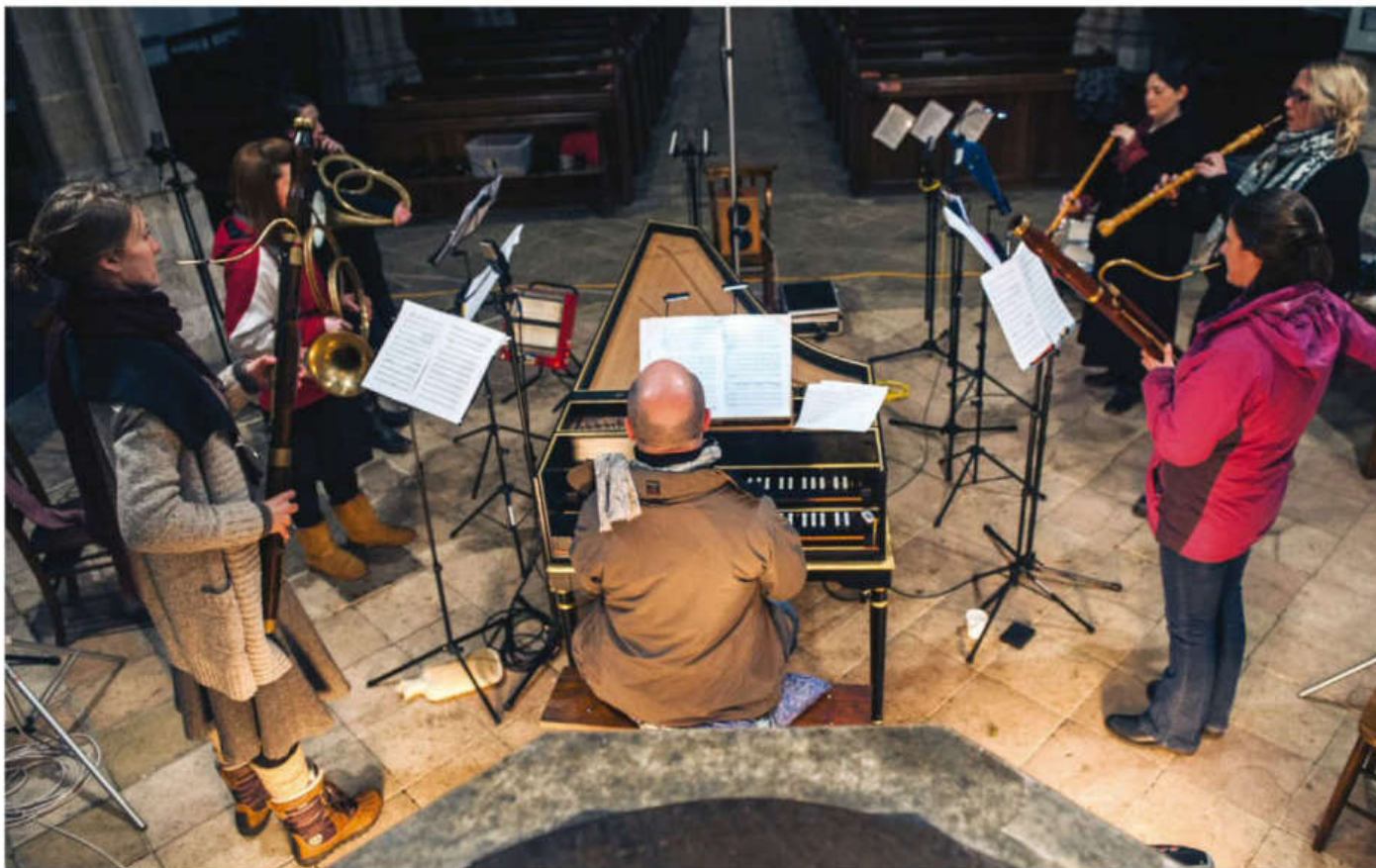
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UK-based ensemble Syrnix, who offer refined performances of Telemann's music for the 'Saxon Alternative' on their debut disc for Resonus

much in favour in German courts in the first decades of the 18th century; but while as so often the Germans had taken their lead in this from Louis XIV's France, the addition of horns was their own innovation, a development known as the *Sächsische Variante*, the 'Saxon Alternative' that was to lead straight towards the Classical *Harmoniemusik* and which gives this recording its title.

Syrinx, a UK-based ensemble making their recording debut, offer clean, well-judged and essentially attractive performances of the 30 short movements that make up these five pieces. I don't know how many other wind pieces Telemann wrote, but it seems likely to be quite a few, so they have chosen well in varying the sounds – horns appear in only three of them, while the Concerto a 5 pits them against oboes d'amore. The overall atmosphere is polite and well-mannered, with the horns resisting the temptation to swamp things with outdoor ebullience. This seems fine in this context – and they still sound splendid – and if anything it is the oboes who one wishes were making a keener and fruitier sound. Elsewhere there are places where more playful imagination would have been welcome, but it is nice to be introduced to this elegant wind music, even if it won't blow your mind. **Lindsay Kemp**

Thuille

Violin Sonatas – Op 1; Op 30. Cello Sonata, Op 22.

Trio for Violin, Viola and Piano

Mark Gothoni *vn* **Ulrich Eichenauer** *va*

Peter Hörr *vc* **Frank-Immo Zichner** *pf*

CPO © ② CPO777 967-2 (114' • DDD)



Various labels have been exploring the music of Ludwig Thuille (1861-1907)

over recent years, though few star names have been drawn to it thus far. Cellist Sophie Rolland recorded the Cello Sonata back in 1994 (ASV, 3/95) with a young pianist named Marc-André Hamelin (wonder what happened to him?), but it was not until 2013 that the two violin sonatas made it to disc (Marco Rogliano and Gianluca Luisi on Naxos). Here, a third Mark champions four of Thuille's chamber works on this rewarding new release. Violinist Mark Gothoni partners Frank-Immo Zichner in the two sonatas.

The first of these, in D minor and four movements, is an early work (1880) dedicated to Thuille's teacher Rheinberger and indebted to his study of Beethoven's classicism. It's an attractive, well-crafted work, especially the last movement, but

lacks an individual voice. Not so its much later companion in E minor from 1904. By then Thuille was well established as a leading figure in the so-called Munich School of composers, reflecting the influence of Wagner, Liszt and (although they had differing musical aesthetics) Richard Strauss, with whom he enjoyed a deep friendship. Thuille's Op 30 demands to be more widely heard, indeed merits a place in the standard repertoire with its ardent themes, superb writing for both instruments (Zichner is kept on the qui vive throughout) and lyrical grace. It is winningly played by both musicians, the sumptuously recorded piano placed well forwards, but I'd like to hear what the sonata sounds like with a fuller, more intense violin tone.

Opp 1 and 30 are on the second of the two CDs. The first has another early work – the Trio for piano, violin and viola from 1885 – which, like the Op 1 Sonata, has four movements, is pleasing enough, has the same lack of individuality and keeps the excellent Zichner extremely busy. Again it is the later work – the Cello Sonata of 1901-02 that opens the disc – that really impresses. Here Thuille has left academia far behind in a work of urgent, lush Romanticism and tightly unified structure. Its sonorous textures are eloquently

projected by Peter Hörr, though Rolland and Hamelin play the second movement at a true *adagio* (13'15"), more of a sombre elegy than Hörr and Zichner's 9'29".

Listening blind it would be hard to guess the identity of the unmistakably late-19th-century German composer but, in Robert Maycock's words, 'the whole work suggests an unquenchable appetite for the making of music which makes it sound fun to play'.

As I say, a rewarding release, but I do wish CPO would do something about the awful paintings they choose for their disc covers. **Jeremy Nicholas**

'Alvorada'

Anonymous El cant dels ocells **Cachaça/ Cartola** Alvorada **Carillo** Dos Gardenias **Cassadó** Solo Cello Suite **Cobián/Cadimaco** Nieblas del riachuelo. Nostalgias **Dames/ Basterra** Nada **Falla** Siete Canciones populares españolas - Jota; Nana **Gismonti/Carneiro** Água e Vinho **A Gobbi** A Orlando Goñi **Granados** Goyescas - Intermezzo **T Jobim** Wave **Lipesker** Romántica **Piazzolla** Escualo. Grand Tango. Oblivion **Plaza** Payadora **Simons** El manisero **Toquinho/Moraes** Tarde em Itapuã **Villa-Lobos** Bachiana Brasileira No 5. O canto do cisne negro **Ophélie Gaillard** vc with various artists Aparté (M) ② AP104 (111' • DDD)



Immediately, 'Alvorada' stands apart from other discs by more typical classical

musicians who make a Spanish/Latin American pitstop. Falla's durable 'Jota' from his *Siete Canciones populares españolas* in cello transcription and accompanied by guitar and castanets rather than piano – all pleasantly and appropriately raucous – sets the tone for so much of the rest. In contrast to the like-minded but bandoneón-dominated Marcelo Nisinman collaboration with the Vogler Quartet ('Señor Tango', issued last year on Philharmonie), Gaillard maintains her identity as a classical cellist but displays a happy adaptability to her 26 hand-picked collaborators, not with the reserve of an outsider but with the invention of a passionate convert.

This disc is a breakthrough for Gaillard not just as a cellist but as a curator of programmes. The two discs are sensitively sequenced to form an arc, starting with the familiar ground of Falla and then moving increasingly towards the more raw, unmediated music of tango, samba and even bossa nova with players you've probably never heard of (some seem only to have one name), with economical

arrangements by Gabriel Sivak and with Gaillard finding some intriguing hybrid sounds by melding her upper range with that of bandoneón player Juanjo Mosalini.

Other cellists have failed to bridge the gap between the instrument's innate suaveness and the unfiltered emotion of this repertoire. Time and again, Gaillard finds intense expression in the upper range of her instrument plus unfathomable melancholy in the bottom, allowing her to fearlessly enter the soul of Astor Piazzolla's greatest hit, *Oblivion*. But she also knows when to stay out of the way. The feel-good *Tarde em Itapuã* with singer Toquinho has sunny surfaces to which Gaillard contributes brief obbligatos.

By the end of the second disc, Gaillard circles back to more familiar classical terrains with Villa-Lobos's *Bachiana Brasileira* No 5 (which has hints of voodoo in her version). The crowning moment is Gaspar Cassadó's *Suite pour violoncello seul*, which synthesises so much of what has come before, reimagining the use of dance in the Bach Suites with his own Latin equivalent, and played with Gaillard not just triumphing over the considerable technical challenges (such as extreme shifts of register) but making the whole thing sing. The disc could benefit from more funkiness not quite allowed by the ultra-clear, almost antiseptic engineering. But as it goes so much further than most of Gaillard's classical colleagues, how can you really complain? **David Patrick Stearns**

'Un concert pour Madame de Sévigné'

Anonymous Ah, quand reviendra-t-il. Canaries. Chaconne. La jeune Iris. Passacaille. Les plaisirs de Mr Gaultier. Two Sarabandes. Two Symphonies **Gaultier** Récit **Hotteterre** Deuxième Suite de Pièces **Lully** Amadis - Symphonie pour les enchantements. Armide - Prélude du sommeil d'Armide. Persée - Ah que l'amour cause d'alarmes **Marais** Menuet and Gavotte. Suite **Visée/Lully** Le triomphe de l'Amour - Entrée d'Apollon **Georges Barthel, Marc Hantaï** fls **Eduardo Egüez** theo **Philippe Pierlot** bass viol Flora ② FLORA2110 (70' • DDD)



The Marquise de Sévigné (1625-96) was a 17th-century blogger, writing letters to family and friends about life at the court of Louis XIV, and in particular performances of Lully during his lifetime, letters that were copied and widely circulated in manuscript. Our quartet

of musicians has gathered together a selection of contemporary music, instrumental trio arrangements of popular songs and Lullian airs as well as duo and solo music such as she might have heard or had performed in her Parisian salon. These works – and many others like them – survive mainly in manuscript, though most are available in facsimile or online.

A letter addressed to Mme de Sévigné in the year of her death mentions a 'joli concert' of music by Visée, Marais and others as evidence of her taste in music, and forms the hook on which the CD hangs. Without a booklet, the listener is guided by the briefest of jacket references.

The trio arrangements would have provided charming, familiar background music to a social occasion and are impeccably performed here, never more so than in the 'Symphonie de flutes pour les enchantements' from Lully's *Amadis* and the 'Prelude du sommeil d'Armide', or when revealing the declamatory qualities of the 'Récit of Mr Gaultier'. Alone, Eduardo Egüez evokes the climax of Lully's sumptuous ballet *Le triomphe de l'Amour* in Visée's arrangement of the 'Entrée d'Apollon'. Marc Hantaï and Georges Barthel delight in Hotteterre's duos for two unaccompanied treble instruments, billing and cooing in 'Les Tourterelles', and Philippe Pierlot's viol-playing is sublime in the early Marais suite. **Julie Anne Sadie**

'Divine Noise'

'Theatrical Music for Two Harpsichords' **F Couperin** La paix du Parnasse **Le Roux** Suite in F **Rameau** Plâtée - Suite (arr Brachetta) **Guillermo Brachetta, Menno van Delft** hpds Resonus ② RES10145 (74' • DDD)



Guillermo Brachetta has set us an aural puzzle: what should we make of it? The theatrical music alluded to in the title refers to his unique arrangement of music from *Plâtée*, Rameau's 1745 *comédie lyrique*, for two double-manual harpsichords. Menno van Delft, his former teacher at the Conservatory of Amsterdam, takes the second part in this masterly interpretation that conveys more the spirit than the letter of the work. Familiarity with the opera itself – full of humour and trenchant mockery – enhances the pleasure of listening to an arrangement that seeks to capture something of the grotesque, deluded frog Platea (sung by a countertenor), her encounters with Jupiter and Juno and the endless ridicule by other



From toccatas to tangos: Mr McFall's Chamber recording 'Solitudes'

animals and birds. Toward that end, the two instruments by Titus Crijnen used in this recording offer a wide palette of instrumental colour and dynamics. If anything were wanting, it might be some representation of Platea's pathos.

By way of setting his version in context, Brachetta chooses a suite from Gaspard Le Roux's 1705 collection of *pièces de clavecin*, which the composer suggested could be performed in one of three ways: as solo works, with an additional melody instrument as a trio or with a second harpsichord. Guided by Le Roux, Brachetta made his own arrangement. He and van Delft play as though on one supercharged harpsichord, their ensemble immaculate, the clarity and resonance of their instruments beautifully captured.

Neither the Le Roux nor Couperin's *La paix du Parnasse* can be described as 'theatrical music', though the latter forms the climax of a programmatic *Apothéose de Lully* (1725): the movements have titles and chronicle the meeting of Lully and Corelli on Mount Parnassus, concluding with a 'sonade en trio' which they play together with their French and Italian muses. Couperin is known to have performed his own music – and presumably that of others – on two harpsichords privately at home. So it's hardly surprising that this excerpt

(presumably originally intended for two violins and bass) works so well, and for many will indeed be 'divine noise'. **Julie Anne Sadie**

'Solitudes'

'Baltic Reflections'

Aho Lamento **Bružaitė** Bangos **Kärki** Täysikuu
Mononen Satumaa **Mustonen** Toccata **Pärt** Für
Alina **Sallinen** Introduction and Tango Overture
Sibelius Einsames Lied. Finlandia Hymn **Tüür**
Dedication **Vasks** Little Summer Music
Mr McFall's Chamber
Delphian © DCD34156 (65' • DDD)



Not just another mood disc hung off Baltic longing, tragedy and melancholy, but one whose view of the Baltic encompasses Finland – a kindred spirit to Latvia, Luthiania and Estonia in its orthodox-tinged melancholy but also a country rather obsessed with tango. 'Nobody quite knows when tango was established in Finland,' says the blurb. When you hear Toivo Kärki's *Täysikuu* spring out of the desolation that is Arvo Pärt's *Für Alina* (wondrously played by Maria Martinova), you get a vivid picture of an oppressed people glimpsing the light relief of the Argentinian dance form that

they went on to make their own (though with all minor keys, naturally).

At the centre of the disc is Pēteris Vasks's fragile *Little Summer Music*, six short movements in which the joy of sunshine is hesitant, veiled – a summer whose revelry dare not speak its name (it was written while Latvia, that country of outdoor summer song, was still under Soviet occupation). That's preceded by Kalevi Aho's intricately weaved *Lamento* for two violas, Erkki-Sven Tüür's brittle *Dedication* for cello and piano, Aulis Sallinen's rhapsodic *Introduction and Tango Overture* and Zita Bružaitė's haunting *Bangos* for solo piano, its repetition of one-bar units creating an unmistakably Baltic sound. The disc opens with Olli Mustonen's Toccata, which has its own Baltic glances, and ends with a rendition of Sibelius's *Finlandia Hymn* in which the tune is played on a musical saw – at once absurd, comic and saddening, like an Aki Kaurismäki film.

Full marks for originality of concept and for execution, which has all this ensemble's trademark style and communicative nous, and for a fascinating booklet-note by Ivan Moody. But after a few listens, I'm all at sea when it comes to any sort of sonic thread or journey in a musical menu that enters the ear with wild and tenuous contrasts, for all its fascinating theoretic consistencies.

Andrew Mellor

Stephen Kovacevich

Geraint Lewis pays tribute to a true ‘pianist’s pianist’ and a complete musician – one who is as much at home on the podium as he is at the keyboard

When Stephen Kovacevich now walks on to the platform, he cuts an enigmatic, white-haired and diminutive figure who smiles shyly before turning to the keyboard. He doesn’t look remotely in his 75th year and his playing belies any impression of such age. When he closed this year’s BBC Wigmore series with Berg’s Sonata, Op 1, it was noted that he made his Wigmore debut with this work as long ago as 1961, when he was 20.

But that wasn’t merely a Wigmore debut as much as his European concert debut, full stop – and it immediately catapulted him to international acclaim at the very start of his career.

Over the extraordinary course of Kovacevich’s journey our perceptions of Berg’s early Sonata may well have mellowed, but this is a pianist who does not ‘go gentle’ into a mellow old age – his wisdom and experience have naturally deepened and accordingly he remains uncompromisingly committed to finding the depth and profundity in any music he plays.

The course of that journey saw him starting out as plain Stephen Bishop from California, who’d come to London aged 18 for lessons with the legendary and universally loved Myra Hess.

There was a brief flurry of controversy in the 1970s when he announced suddenly that he would become Stephen Bishop-Kovacevich for a time, with the ultimate intention of dropping the Bishop altogether. This was in acknowledgement of his father’s Croatian heritage and his own deeply felt identification with the Central European tradition that lay at the heart of his musical experience. And the transition to Kovacevich was accomplished so seamlessly that the Bishop just melted away naturally – surely in part because this ‘pianist’s pianist’ remained true to his inherent strength of probing the music with integrity without any need of extraneous distractions or celebrity flim-flam.

‘Schubert is one of those select composers with whom he shares a rare quality of understanding, amounting to communion’

It would perhaps be apposite to say of Kovacevich – as Sibelius did of his Fourth Symphony – that there was ‘absolutely nothing of the circus’ about him. This work happens to be one of his favourite scores and he has frequently conducted it with many major orchestras. Yes – Kovacevich, very much as the ‘complete musician’, started conducting in the early 1980s, and not merely in terms of directing concertos from the keyboard, though he did that

superlatively too. It is a great shame that this aspect of his career was not exploited as fully by record companies and promoters as happened with contemporaries such

as Barenboim and Ashkenazy. But I recall a concert with the London Mozart Players when Kovacevich conducted the finest live performance I’ve ever heard of Mozart’s *Jupiter* Symphony (with all repeats) as well as the most exciting of Beethoven’s Second Piano Concerto, in which soloist and orchestra were miraculously as one.

One suspects that Kovacevich is perfectly philosophical about the varied paths taken by his career in an era when

image often matters much more than insight. He has a wry turn of self-deprecating humour as when (again in his recent Wigmore broadcast) he stopped after a bit of bother in the finale of Schubert’s late, great A major Sonata saying: ‘I think I’ve just taken the wrong turning – going to Glasgow instead of Edinburgh!’ and then played the movement again, impeccably.

Schubert is one of those select composers with whom he shares a rare quality of understanding, amounting at times to communion. He has spoken vividly of the way in which the slow movement of that same A major Sonata suddenly collapses into a nervous breakdown and in concert in Cardiff this May he re-enacted this experience – but

DEFINING MOMENTS

•1951 – *Early promise*

Makes concerto debut in his native San Francisco, aged 11, playing the Ravel G major and the Schumann

•1961 – *Landmark debut recital*

European concert debut at London’s Wigmore Hall

•1970s – *Bishop becomes Kovacevich*

Announces intention to change his surname from Bishop to Kovacevich

•1978 – *At the piano with Argerich*

Duet recording with personal and professional partner Martha Argerich

•1984 – *Takes up the baton*

Conducting debut with the Houston Symphony

•1993 – *A triumphant return to Brahms*

EMI recording of the Brahms’s First Piano Concerto with the LPO and Sawallisch wins a *Gramophone* Award

•2015 – *Birthday celebration*

Returns to the Wigmore Hall to mark his 75th birthday



as if encountering it for the first time. The fragility in the music emerged with that air of improvisation which the score itself can only convey in part. At another concert in an ancient church in North Wales nearly two decades ago I recall a moment in the slow movement of the B flat Sonata when that net of intimate communication between composer, performer and audience (Benjamin Britten's 'holy triangle') became momentarily tangible and time magically stood still, until a cough broke the spell. On mentioning this to him afterwards he smiled: 'Yes, I felt that moment too – you can't will it, but when it happens...wow!'

PHOTOGRAPHY: TOMOAKI HIKAWA

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



Schubert Piano Sonata No 20, D959. Moments musicaux, D780
EMI/Warner Classics
555219-2 (1/96)

In partnerships with Sir Colin Davis and Wolfgang Sawallisch in particular, Kovacevich has left a legacy of concerto recordings – Mozart (K467 and 503, far too few!), Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms (twice), Grieg and Bartók – and a second Beethoven cycle self-directed with the Australian Chamber Orchestra – which come as close to an ideal as is humanly possible. His Beethoven *Diabelli* Variations (both early and late) and the complete sonatas, as well as special examples of Bach, Chopin and Schubert, enshrine the self-effacing authority of a master who comes top of the pile for so many listeners who put the music first and the messenger second. **G**

Instrumental



Caroline Gill welcomes another fine version of Bach's Cello Suites:

'It is hard to imagine how Philip Higham could have done better than choose these very different instruments' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 85**



Bryce Morrison on an exciting new disc of Ginastera piano music:

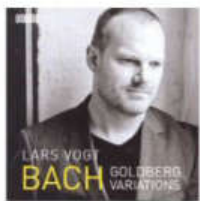
'Poizat could hardly have produced a more dazzling tribute to Argentina's foremost composer' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 89**

JS Bach

Goldberg Variations, BWV988

Lars Vogt *pf*

Online © ODE1273-2 (77' • DDD)



I've enjoyed this disc a lot and return to complete playings of it with pleasure. That

says much about the way Lars Vogt has responded to the overarching quality of the *Goldberg Variations* as a 75-minute continuous piece, with its astonishing variety of mood, rhythm, style and sonority. He has taken his time over adding it to his repertoire, as he does with everything. In an interview that provides the text for the booklet, it's clear he has not wanted to impose himself, but for Bach's most demanding keyboard work to come to him. This is not false modesty: he is a personable player, to my mind the most interesting of current native German pianists by some distance.

You don't get far as a player of this great piece without mastery of your instrument, and I'm sure all the pianists and harpsichordists who have set down admired versions will have shared his seriousness and humility. Yet in joining them he seems to me to bring qualities of freshness and *joie de vivre* to the *Goldbergs* that have often been much less marked. He is not reverential and he has noted – correctly, surely – how entertaining the Variations are. No tempo is prescribed for the theme – the opening Aria – so why make it an *adagio*, overlaid with expressive weight? He has also noted the subtle connections between some of the variations, over and above Bach's cyclic scheme of making every third one a canon: there are connections of register, and sometimes of character; and from time to time a variation will lead off as if prompted by a motif or patterning of notes in the one before. There are more obvious intensifications of mood – in Var 25, for example, in G minor, which Wanda Landowska used to describe as the 'Black

Pearl' of the set – and of virtuoso display (Vars 28 and 29, making an inseparable pair). The continuity of Vogt's performance owes much to his perceptiveness in these matters, and it's obvious he has thought hard about the articulation of the 30 diverse pieces and how the judgement of pauses between them is important. The manner in which the statements of the Aria at beginning and end frame them is another consideration. And I like the fact that he doesn't hang about. Indeed, Var 30, the last one, the Quodlibet, resounds as something joyous and culminating to an extent I found unexpected and irresistible.

'Take more pleasure in your playing,' Schnabel used to say to pupils inhibited by the task in hand. Vogt has observed how entertaining the *Goldberg Variations* are, as an exceptional creation, and we may speculate what a pleasure they must have been to write. They need not be approached as a sacred object, he seems to be suggesting, or a last will and testament; and they will perhaps speak more vividly if the player has the courage to desanctify, just a little, the monument they have perhaps become. What gravity some of the performances of the past used to have, and how interminably slow they were.

On the piano, the work appears as a transcription, of course, since it was composed for a two-manual harpsichord. You miss the harpsichord most in those brilliant running numbers that exploit the crossing of hands through the registers. Yet the modern piano is a wonderful resource of colour in Bach, as many great players from Edwin Fischer to our own day have shown. I would never pass up an opportunity to hear András Schiff, Murray Perahia, Igor Levit and Richard Goode play him. Like them, Lars Vogt uses the sustaining pedal hardly at all, and his ability to make polyphony clear and *cantabile* (in a 'singing' style, that's to say) with the fingers alone is a model of how this should be. Bach insisted on it to his pupils and it's often terribly hard to do, but marvellous when you can.

Ornamentation? Anything beyond what Bach notated would be an intrusion.

Baroque variation is above all the art of ornamentation and here, in the representation of it at its highest point, everything is written out, every grace made manifest. Vogt mentions, in passing, his intense occupation with historical performance practice as an essential part of his preparation – just as it should be.

I like the studio recording, which has an ideal blend of clarity and warmth, and conveys the air of something live and properly ambitious. Lars Vogt is an artist with much to communicate, and this is a distinguished addition to the discography of the *Goldberg Variations* in all their glorious elegance. **Stephen Plaistow**

JS Bach • Prokofiev • Schumann

JS Bach English Suite No 2, BWV807

Prokofiev Piano Sonata No 6, Op 82

Schumann Faschingsschwank aus Wien, Op 26

Elisabeth Nielsen *pf*

Danacord © DACOCD761 (75' • DDD)



In her accompanying essay to this release (there is no specific biography), the Danish

pianist Elisabeth Nielsen claims that the unifying factor in her programme of Bach, Schumann and Prokofiev is 'dance'. Yet while this is a prime factor in Bach's English Suite No 2 in A minor, it is hardly the principal characteristic of Schumann's *Faschingsschwank aus Wien* or Prokofiev's Sixth Sonata. Nor is the rhythmic resilience central to dance readily discernible in Nielsen's playing. On the credit side, she is thoughtful and nuanced in the *Tempo di valzer lentissimo* of the Prokofiev, where she temporarily forgets the hyper-tension that plagues her elsewhere. But even when she is partially suited to Prokofiev's aggression to, as Richter put it, 'a world without reason or equilibrium', she is cautious rather than *vivace* in the whirlwind finale.

Churlish to mention recordings by Richter himself and Kissin when Nielsen is



Lars Vogt, who brings 'seriousness and humility' to his new recording of Bach's Goldberg Variations on Ondine

still pursuing postgraduate studies, but her disc is surely premature. In Bach she is hard-edged, hardly making you recall András Schiff's assertion that 'Bach is the most Romantic of all composers'. From Nielsen, proficiency rather than beauty rules, with a failure to exploit the resources of a modern instrument's capacity for colour, texture and inflection. Her sonority in Schumann is monochrome, too. The 'Romanze' is more successful, with a welcome sense of pensiveness, but elsewhere this is little more than a literal view of Schumann's wild and kaleidoscopic Romanticism. Danacord's sound lacks vividness, though there is a delightful surprise in the inclusion in the booklet of eight drawings from Nielsen's childhood.

Bryce Morrison

JS Bach

Six Solo Cello Suites, BWV1007-1012

Philip Higham VC

Delphian ® ② DCD34150 (130' • DDD)



From the first open G string of the first Prelude, the persona of Philip Higham's

performance of the Bach Cello Suites could not be clearer as one of quietly self-assured gentleness. There is a combined impression of bravery and calm here, and no sense of Higham trying to present either something artistically ambiguous or a final and categorical account of his thoughts on these pieces. That is not to say that this set is not carefully considered, though: on the contrary, there are countless minutely wrought corners in the subtlety of his phrases and their direction through each suite that give this performance a powerful personality. The listener is left with a feeling that this is a snapshot of where Higham is now as a performer rather than concluding that this recording is intended to be something 'definitive'.

There is further insight to be found in the audible care taken in this reading, played from a facsimile of Anna Magdalena Bach's manuscript copy of the Suites. Furthermore, this is a set where the instruments themselves take centre stage: Higham plays his usual warm and fulsome Testore for Suites Nos 1 to 5 but swaps to a clean and crisp modern five-string Roth cello for the filigree Sixth Suite. It is hard to imagine how Higham could have done better than choose these very different instruments to elicit the combinations of

tone and colour that he is able to achieve across the Suites.

This cellist is, in fact, particularly good at matching instrument to music: his disc of the Britten Suites (3/13) exposed with accomplishment how that composer uses the sounds and colours of the cello to reference the Bach (and Shostakovich). What is apparent in this recording, as an added layer of nuance in an already exceptional performance, is the presentation of the context in the Bach Suites themselves, the two discs together creating a holistic approach of great artistry. **Caroline Gill**

Beethoven

Diabelli Variations, Op 120, plus variations by Assmayer, Bocklet, Czapek, C & J Czerny, Dietrichstein, Drechsler, Förster, Freystädtler, Gänsbacher, Gelinek, Halm, J Hoffmann, Horzalka, Huglmann, Hummel, Hüttenbrenner, Kalkbrenner, Kanne, Kerzkowsky, C Kreutzer, Lannoy, Leidesdorf, Liszt, Mayseder, Moscheles, Mosel, FXW Mozart, Panny, Payer, Pixis, Planchy, Rieger, Riotte, Roser, Schoberlechner, Schubert, Sechter, 'SRD' (Archduke of Austria), M Stadler, Szalay, Tomášek, Umlauff, F Weber, Winkler, Vitásek and Voříšek

Pier Paolo Vincenzi pf

Brilliant Classics © ② 94836 (136' • DDD)

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Anton Diabelli's call to 'The Foremost Tone Poets and Virtuosi of Vienna

and the Austrian States' each to write a variation on his waltz for an anthology entitled *Vaterländischer Künstlerverein* eventually led to a two-part collection, one devoted to Beethoven's Op 120, one containing the other composers' variations. Part 2 gets little attention, except for Schubert's gorgeous minor-key variation and an energetic piece by the youthful Liszt. While some contributors deserve their obscurity, many moments nevertheless hold interest, such as Jakob Freystädter's metrical displacements, Emanuel Aloys's knotty double-note sequences, Archduke Rudolph's well-crafted fugal essay, plus Carl Czerny's complex and sophisticated coda.

Pier Paolo Vincenzi appears to be the first pianist to offer the complete Diabelli collection on disc since Rudolf Buchbinder's 1973 release (Teldec, 10/73). For the most part, Buchbinder favours steadier tempi and a kind of classical reserve in the non-Beethoven works, which contrasts with Vincenzi's looser-limbed conceptions. Compare, for example, Vincenzi's *rubato* leeway in Joseph Kerzkowsky's lyrically gentle piece to Buchbinder's stricter reading. And whereas Vincenzi's wandering rhythm pulls Jan August Vitásek's busy textures in and out of focus, Buchbinder keeps the bass-lines and middle-register double notes in clear perspective. Vincenzi is certainly capable of lightness and sparkle, as the flashy Czerny and Payer variations prove, but not to the degree of Artur Balsam's recently released 1962 SWR broadcast downloads.

Vincenzi's Beethoven reveals similar interpretative ups and downs. Why the superfluous tapering of the waltz theme's cadences? The first variation's march is prosaic and heavy-footed. Then we have No 2's dynamically constricted alternating chords, 'one size fits all' *ritards* at phrase ends in Nos 3, 8 and 18, capable but cautious fingerwork in No 23's two-handed scampering and a slightly lethargic *Tempo di menuetto* final variation. By contrast, Vincenzi judges No 21's tempo shifts to incisive perfection, plays the broken right-hand patterns in No 17 with firm authority and wields an impressively supple left hand in No 25. Perhaps a more resonant, less overly close sound image would have helped. As it stands, it's best to stick with Buchbinder for both *Diabelli* volumes

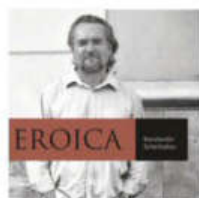
together. Kovacevich's remake remains Op 120's currently available modern-day version of choice, until someone reissues Charles Rosen's incomparable 1977 recording. **Jed Distler**

Beethoven – selected comparison:
Kovacevich (1/09) (Onyx) ONYX4035

Beethoven

Piano Sonatas – No 8, 'Pathétique', Op 13; No 23, 'Appassionata', Op 57. 'Eroica' Variations, Op 35
Konstantin Scherbakov *pf*

Two Pianists (F) TP1039190 (65' • DDD)



Beethoven introduces his *Eroica* Variations with the theme's bare-boned architectural essence. Konstantin Scherbakov, however, can't help but embellish the foundation with a breath pause here and an italicisation there, signifying entertainment up ahead. Sure enough, the pianist fortifies Var 1's accompaniment with a lilting 'oom-pah' effect, while dispatching Var 2's left-hand part like a forceful walking bass-line. There's also an airy suppleness to Var 3's repeated-chord motif that one often doesn't hear. In Var 9, Scherbakov places the left-hand grace notes slightly off the beat to create an almost bagpipe-like drone, yet he curiously underplays those in Var 13's right hand, whereas Emanuel Ax relishes their dissonant and obsessive qualities. The lyrical variations and the fugal finale further benefit from Ax's larger portfolio of dynamics and expressive inflections.

There's an impassioned and fearless quality to Scherbakov's best Beethoven-Liszt symphony recordings which emerges only intermittently in the two 'name' sonatas here. You sense this in the tamed subito dynamics of the *Pathétique's* *Grave* introduction and in the way the pianist rounds off the first movement's brash edges. His sustained deliberation over the *Adagio cantabile* is straightforward to the point of dutiful. By contrast, the Rondo abounds in dynamic contrasts; but Scherbakov's tapered and sectionalised phrasing draws attention more to the pianist than to the music. The improvisatory nature of the *Appassionata's* first movement better absorbs Scherbakov's pianistically orientated tempo fluctuations and novel articulations. Classical reserve, by contrast, governs Scherbakov's tightly unified *Andante con moto* variations. The finale is impressively clear and assured, aside from cavalier details like the clipped rather than sustained opening *fortissimo* chords, the mannered *diminuendo* at the

end of the *Presto* coda's first phrase and an additional D natural that somehow slipped into the third-to-last chord. **Jed Distler**

'Eroica' Variations – selected comparison:

Ax (7/13) (SONY) 88765 42086-2

Chopin

Andante spianato and Grande Polonaise brillante, Op 22. Ballade No 4, Op 52. Berceuse, Op 57. Three Nocturnes, Op 9. Piano Sonata No 3, Op 58. Tarantelle, Op 43

Maria Perrotta *pf*

Decca (F) 481 1851 (80' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Piccolo Teatro 'Giuseppe Borselli', Cento, Ferrara, Italy, June 1, 2014



Maria Perrotta offers a richly comprehensive and demanding live Chopin programme on her new disc from Italian Decca. For one local critic, her playing compares favourably with Pollini ('where Pollini is fast and formalistic, Perrotta is analytical and expressive but, like Pollini, always maintains a sense of formal unity'). Yet while her musicianship is, at its best, intense and compelling, it can also be overbearing with, at times, an almost Teutonic view of Chopin.

She is bold and impassioned in the Op 9 Nocturnes, with a dramatic sense of romantic elegy. But she hardly makes you forget, say, Cherkassky's enchanting whimsy in No 2, and she lacks Rubinstein's patrician ease in No 3. Overall, she misses the elegance that so often lies behind Chopin's seething passions.

This is notably true of her performance of the ever-elusive Fourth Ballade; and while the Berceuse gets off to an aptly slow and dream-like start, she lets in too much daylight as the music's floridity increases. Perrotta is more strenuous than delectably light-fingered (in, for example, Benjamin Grosvenor's way) in the *Andante spianato and Grande Polonaise brillante*; and if the start of the Third Sonata is undoubtedly *maestoso*, it is also ponderous, with a loss of line and impetus. Textures are again heavy and lacking in transparency in the *Scherzo*, and in the *Largo* she forces your attention so that, paradoxically, she makes you rebel and let your mind wander. Only in the coda of the great galloping finale does she let go and achieve a thrilling sense of exultation. Overall, this is disappointing, particularly when you think of Pietro de Maria's more stylish and distinguished complete Chopin cycle, which languishes in Italy and remains unavailable here. **Bryce Morrison**



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Chopin

Preludes, Op 28

Maxence Pilchen *pf*

Paraty © PARATY115131 (35' • DDD)



In the past 12 months alone these pages have noted new recordings of Chopin's Preludes by Ingrid Fliter, Daniel Trifonov, Andrew Tyson, Yulianna Avdeeva, Grigory Sokolov and Jean-Philippe Collard – Fliter, for me, the most consistently satisfying. Among the 60 or so other recordings are classics by Cortot, Moiseiwitsch and Argerich. The Franco-Belgian Maxence Pilchen makes his recording debut with them. Nothing wrong with that, for these 24 miniature masterpieces provide the opportunity to demonstrate a pianist's entire technical and musical command. But given the wealth of competition it is surely wrong-headed – and a foolhardy marketing ploy – to issue a disc of an unheralded newcomer with just the 24 Preludes and nothing else.

This might be understandable were the playing truly outstanding. But it isn't. Pilchen is a fine young pianist, as anyone must be who tackles these deceptively difficult little tone-poems, but compared with the illustrious names listed above he is, frankly, *vin ordinaire*. One overriding virtue of his playing is that he does not sentimentalise the music, and the soulful B minor and D flat Preludes are models of simplicity (unlike the self-indulgence which for me marred Sokolov's recent set – DG, 2/15). I like, too, the beautifully graded dynamics of the C minor and much thoughtful detail elsewhere. The *stretto* bars in the E minor are overcooked for my taste, and, though Pilchen is no slouch when it comes to tossing off the semiquavers at *presto con fuoco*, the *fortissimo* left-hand octaves in the infamous B flat minor lose their impact in a blur of pedal: a fast ride in a faceless machine. Hear, by contrast, what imagination Cortot in 1926 and Lhévinne in 1936 bring to it. And it is to Cortot (though he is prone to exaggeration) and others of his ilk to whom one turns in Op 28 for the story-telling beyond the notes.

Jeremy Nicholas

Ginastera · Mompou

Ginastera *Danzas argentinas*, Op 2. *Milonga*, Op 3. Piano Sonata No 1, Op 22. *Suite de danzas criollas*, Op 15. Three Pieces, Op 6 **Mompou** Prelude No 5

François-Xavier Poizat *pf*

Piano Classics © PCLO087 (46' • DDD)



François-Xavier Poizat, a 26-year-old French-Swiss pianist, could hardly have

produced a more dazzling tribute to Ginastera, Argentina's foremost composer. He comes praised to the skies by Martha Argerich, Boris Berezovsky and the composer's wife, and is presently working with the Argentinian pianist Nelson Goerner. His pianism is as alive to seduction (the *Adagietto pianissimo* from the *Suite de danzas criollas*) as to every virtuoso blaze, such as in the 'Danza del gaucho matrero' from the *Danzas argentinas*, to be played *furiosamente*, *violente*, *mordento* (biting) and *salvaggio* (wild). His 'Danza de la moza donosa', also from Op 2, may be less sultry than from Argerich in her incomparable live performance (EMI, 4/00), but it is never less than assured.

How he revels, too, in the First Sonata's *Presto misterioso*, a phantom chase taking its cue from Bartók, notably in its final break-up into ghostly fragments. He captures all the raucous brilliance of the *Allegro rustico* from the *Suite de danzas criollas* (dedicated to Rudolf Firkušný, clearly invited to forget his aristocratic pianism), and is finely sensitive to the mournful folksong of the *Milonga* as it floats across its swaying accompaniment. As an encore, Poizat adds Mompou's Prelude No 5, a gentle and loving tribute to Ginastera's Catalan origin. The pianist is well recorded and this is so much more than a collector's piece. **Bryce Morrison**

Liszt

'Complete Piano Music, Vol 40 –

Transcriptions from Operas by Meyerbeer'

Illustrations du Prophète, S414. *Cavatine de*

Robert le diable, S412a. *Réminiscences de*

Robert le diable – Valse infernale, S413.

Illustrations de L'Africaine, S415

Sergio Gallo *pf*

Naxos © 8 573235 (83' • DDD)



Volume 40 of Naxos's complete piano music of Liszt usefully combines all but one of the major solo Meyerbeer transcriptions. Only the *Grande Fantaisie* on themes from *Les Huguenots* is missing (that appeared on the very first volume of the series, played by the masterful Arnaldo Cohen – 6/97) but, with a generous running time of 82'57", not many more notes could have been accommodated on this disc.

Sadly, there are few other positives. Sergio Gallo's mission is not helped by having to kick off with one of Liszt's least successful operatic transcriptions, the first of the three *Illustrations du Prophète*, an irritatingly fragmented medley of the Coronation March, the Anabaptist's chant from Act 1 (which provided the material for Liszt's organ masterpiece *Ad nos, ad salutarem undam* and his piano duet version) and the Hymn of Triumph from Act 3. It is music not helped by the insistently strident tone of the piano. The Model D's shrill, resonant upper treble at *forte* and above contrasts with a dull, chalky middle register that seems to emanate from a smaller instrument – and one with hammers that need some TLC.

Having endured over 16 minutes of this, one turns for relief to the (almost as lengthy) 'Les patineurs scherzo'. But where is the wit, the playfulness, the sheer fun of this once-popular showpiece? Louis Kentner's famous 1939 recording, albeit heavily (and, some might say, beneficially) abridged, is in an altogether different realm. The third *Illustration* fares little better, where Gallo is as much the opera house répétiteur as he is in the 'Valse infernale' from *Robert le diable*, a favourite piece with Liszt's audiences. Here the incomparable Earl Wild shows Gallo a clean pair of heels in his celebrated 1968 Vanguard recording (now available on Piano Classics). Gallo's best playing comes in the quieter interludes of the 'Prière des matelots', the first of the two *Illustrations de L'Africaine*, but it is hardly enough to save a listening experience reserved for only the most ardent Liszt-heads.

Jeremy Nicholas

Pasquini

'Suites and Variations'

Corrente con Variazione in A la mi re. Partite

diversi di folia. Passacagli in G minor. Suites –

per l'Inglese di Scozia; in A minor; in B major;

in B minor; in G minor. *Tastata per il Signor*

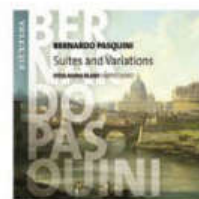
Melani. *Toccata in B*. *Toccata quinta*.

Variazioni – d'Invenzione in d sol re;

'per Francia'; 'per Petronilla'

Lydia Maria Blank *hpd*

Etcetera © KTC1532 (78' • DDD)



Bernardo Pasquini (1637-1710) is a shadowy one all right. A contemporary in

Rome of Corelli and Alessandro Scarlatti, he mixed in the same environment of high aristocratic patronage (he lived in the palace of Prince Borghese), joining them

in a troika of composers deemed distinguished enough to be admitted to the Arcadian Academy. The keyboard man of the three, he was a widely renowned harpsichordist and teacher whose pupils included hopefuls from German and Italy, and it is almost certain that Handel and Domenico Scarlatti heard him play. Few today, however, will be familiar with his music; discs devoted to him are rare.

This new one perhaps shows why, for whereas the string concertos and sonatas of Corelli and the vocal works of Scarlatti still touch modern ears with their vigour and beauty, Pasquini's suites, toccatas and variations sound rather more locked in the 17th century; and, compared to his keyboard predecessor Frescobaldi and successor Domenico Scarlatti, his music also lacks drama and weight. Yet it is still worth investigating, and Lydia Maria Blank, a harpsichordist whose previous recordings suggest a relish of tougher assignments than this (has anyone else ever devoted an entire disc to anonymous pieces?), certainly finds in it a vein of eloquence and a sureness of touch at the keyboard that make his contemporary reputation understandable.

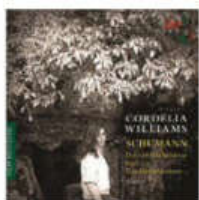
Pasquini's suites are melody-led, thoroughly Italianate (no French-style broken-chord counterpoint here) and over in a trice, his toccatas free-roaming and varied but likewise on the short side. More substantial, and more interesting, are his variation sets, particularly the 17-minute *Variazioni d'Invenzione*, which offers impressive bursts of finger-twisting virtuosity but ends in beguiling simplicity. Blank, playing on a surprisingly sweet-toned Italian-style harpsichord with crisp technique and subtle touch, does a good job of communicating the pleasing characteristics of this largely forgotten keyboard master. **Lindsay Kemp**

Schumann

Davidsbündlertänze, Op 6. *Fantasie*, Op 17. *Geistervariationen*, WoO24

Cordelia Williams *pf*

Somm Céleste © SOMMCD0150 (77' • DDD)



The young British pianist Cordelia Williams turns her attention to Schumann

for her latest recording, combining two established masterpieces with a late rarity. In *Davidsbündlertänze* there is a suspicion that she relates more to Eusebius than Florestan, with some fine hushed playing in No 2 ('Innig') and the rapturously

lyrical inspiration that is No 14 ('Zart und singend'). However, in the latter, Haefliger sings the line to greater effect, while Uchida uses her reactivity to sublime ends. In the Florestan-ish numbers, such as No 4 ('Ungeduldig'), Williams is less unbuttoned than some, while No 12 ('Mit Humor') is just a bit polite, Uchida and Haefliger both taking more risks.

The C major *Fantasie* throws up a different issue: the need to sustain the music over longer spans. Williams seems to trade this for reactivity, particularly in the opening movement. And her central March feels curiously underpowered: I think she's trying to show that it's not simply a show of strength, as it can be with some artists, but to these ears it lacks momentum. Timings only tell a partial story but she takes 7'45" compared to Andsnes's 6'54" in a reading that is superbly energised but never bombastic. And the seraphic finale is simply too short-breathed here. The late *Geistervariationen*, first cousin to the Violin Concerto's slow movement, are played tastefully but a tad cautiously. **Harriet Smith**

Davidsbündlertänze – selected comparisons:

Haefliger (10/92) (SONY) SK48036

Uchida (12/10) (DECC) 478 2280DH2

Fantasie – selected comparison:

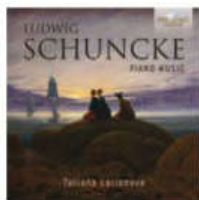
Andsnes (10/97) (EMI) 556414-2

Schuncke

Grande Sonata, Op 3. *Divertissement brillant sur des motifs allemands*, Op 12. *Caprices* – No 1, Op 9; No 2, Op 10. *Rondeau brillant*, Op 11. *Rondeau*, Op 15. *Air suisse variée*

Tatiana Larionova *pf*

Brilliant © 94807 (70' • DDD)



Poor old Ludwig Schuncke! He makes Mozart and Schubert seem long-lived,

dying of tuberculosis in 1834, two weeks shy of his 24th birthday. This is the first CD dedicated to his music and Tatiana Larionova is a sympathetic advocate. The most ambitious work here is Schuncke's G minor *Grande Sonata*, dedicated to his friend Schumann, who returned the favour by dedicating his *Toccata* to him. Schuncke was only 21 when he composed it, so it's perhaps not surprising that, though full of fire (and notes!), it's not exactly the last word in formal or harmonic innovation. Larionova is well up to its technical challenges, though the resonant acoustic doesn't flatter the more fingery passagework; this she dispatches proficiently, but it could perhaps have had more in the way of light and shade (how

well Howard Shelley would play this piece). In the *Andante sostenuto*, too, she is simply too slow; it comes off much more persuasively in the hands of Mario Patuzzi, who also displays a degree more fervour in the *Scherzo*.

'Brilliant' is a word that repeatedly crops up, and at times Larionova sounds a touch too careful – in the glistening the *Divertissement brillant* or the First Caprice, an entirely different prospect from the darker-hued Second Caprice, dedicated to Chopin and seeming in places to prefigure Liszt. The *Rondeau brillant* does pretty much what it says on the tin, though Schuncke comes up with a lusciously Chopinesque melody (tr 8, 2'32"). And to end, a truly silly set of variations which clothes a simple Swiss melody in increasingly outlandish garb. Once again, I felt Larionova could have let her hair down a little more, though her dedication to Schuncke's cause is to be applauded.

Harriet Smith

Grande Sonata – selected comparison:

Patuzzi (DYNA) S2027

Silvestrov

Piano Sonatas – No 1; No 2; No 3; *Classical Sonata*. *Children's Music I*. *Nostalgia*

Simon Smith *pf*

Delphian © DCD34151 (78' • DDD)



Silvestrov's three numbered piano sonatas span 20 years, from 1960 to 1979,

and together say much about the evolution of his musical outlook. The story is not as simple as the progressive simplification that generally springs to mind with this composer. The lessons he learnt as a modernist transgressive in Kiev, following in the footsteps of Webern and Nono, stayed with him, at least in terms of sensitivity to timbre and harmonic overtones (the influence of George Crumb undoubtedly added new dimensions in the 1970s). The fact that both the First and Third sonatas include ghost-like reincarnations of a fugue reinforces the affinity across stylistic boundaries. The apparently more straightforward *Classical Sonata* and the first of two volumes of *Children's Music* included on Simon Smith's well-filled disc also manage to conceal as much as they reveal, though not, I feel, with comparable imaginative power (in which respect the single-movement Second Sonata is surely the standout work and the one most deserving of wider dissemination).



The accordion player Helmut C. Jacobs, who explores the byways of the Spanish Baroque on his new disc for Es-Dur

All these aesthetic balancing acts come not with massively demonstrative technical demands but with fanatically scrupulous notation. Vagueness or lack of intensity are fatal. Simon Smith approaches the task with dedication and sensitivity; but somewhere along the line between his touch, the piano's tone, the acoustic and the recording, much of the music's colouristic nuance, and hence its essential atmosphere, has been lost. Alexey Lubimov's recording of the three sonatas for Erato – itself by no means sonically ideal – are far closer to the mark, though its scarcity means you currently have to pay a premium price. **David Fanning**

Piano Sonatas – selected comparison:

Lubimov (ERAT) 2292 45631-2

'Boleros and Fandangos'

Anonymous Bolero: Allegretto (two pieces).

Bolero: Andante. Bolero de la Cachucha. Bolero del Sorongo. Fandango. El Fandango: Allegro. Fandango con diferencias. Fandango de Cádiz. Fandango intermediado de La rondeña.

Fandango with Variations **Dugazon** Bolero.

Fandango **Hernández** Fandango **Lawrence**

A Favorite Fandango **Pratsch** Fandango, Op 2

Soler Fandango

Helmut C. Jacobs *accco*

Es-Dur © ES2057 (56' • DDD)



This album follows an earlier recording by the same artist, accordionist Helmut C. Jacobs, devoted to the fandango. The current release also features several fandangos, including a sprawling and fascinating work by Antonio Soler, intermixed with boleros, a related dance form that emerged in Spain slightly later in the 18th century. Unlike the fandango, built over a repeated bass ostinato pattern, the bolero is a looser form, and in many ways more interesting, expressive and certainly less repetitive. The fandango, indeed, can be a bit monotonous.

Most of the works here were originally written for the keyboard – harpsichord or pianoforte – though in at least one case, all that is preserved is a melodic line (with Jacobs filling in the implied bass). The accordion makes a very different sound, lacking the strong ictus of the harpsichord and much of the versatility of the pianoforte.

And yet it is an obvious choice for transcription, given the origins of these works in social dance. You may think,

for a moment, that you are hearing a small organ, though the accordion tends to be breathier than that, and the tone lacks the indefinite but robust sustaining sound of the organ. Jacobs's performance tends to sound at times slightly laboured or ponderous, though he compensates for the instrument's disadvantages with a smart use of agogic accents and slight but strategic tempo changes.

The Soler, lasting almost 13 minutes, is the highlight of the album, with more musical interest and more compositional mastery on display than many of the other rather slight works. Jacobs is at his best in this piece, sustaining the drama, deftly navigating the twists and turns and keeping the ears alert to the composer's ingenuity in developing variations over the rather wearying two-bar accompaniment pattern. A collection of anonymous works from the Harry Ransom Center archive at the University of Texas in Austin is also full of pleasant diversions. But the disc invites more background listening than focused attention. **Philip Kennicott**

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Oliver Knussen

Richard Whitehouse profiles a composer who has been at the forefront of British contemporary music since his teens

It is hard to remember a time when Oliver Knussen was not a seminal presence on the new music scene in the UK, such has been his influence as composer and, latterly, conductor. Part of this significance lies in the essence of an output which, over the course of a career now approaching its half-century, has elided the perceived boundaries between modernist and neo-tonal thinking to have beset (and, in many cases, inhibited) any number of lesser figures. A creative ambiguity, moreover, that was evident from his earliest compositions.

Knussen was born into a family with direct experience of practical music-making. His father, Stuart, was for many years Principal Double Bass with the London Symphony Orchestra, and it was with this orchestra that the 15-year-old made his public debut not only as composer but also as a conductor – standing in for an indisposed István Kertész to direct the world premiere of his First Symphony, which event attracted immediate attention on both sides of the Atlantic. Long withdrawn, its purposeful amalgam of serial thinking

‘Knussen has elided the perceived boundaries between modernist and neo-tonal thinking’

and trenchant rhythmic impetus provided the basis for what followed; not least the Concerto for Orchestra – which, revised in 2002 as Symphony in One Movement, is a showpiece of great technical resource, and the sombre *Choral* (1970) with its granitic writing for wind, percussion and double basses. The climax of this phase was the Second Symphony (1971): on one level a song-cycle for soprano and chamber orchestra, to texts by Georg Trakl and Sylvia Plath which chart a trajectory from dreaming to awakening, its formal and expressive poise yield a rare combination of sense and sensibility.

The 1970s was, in fact, framed by symphonic projects: a decade which took in such notable works as the alluring setting of Guillaume Apollinaire that is *Océan de terre*, the explosive setting of Trakl that is *Trumpets*, the capricious ensemble interplay of *Ophelia Dances Book 1* and the resourceful ‘Triptych’ of pieces comprising *Autumnal* (violin and piano), *Cantata* (oboe and string trio) and *Sonya’s Lullaby* (piano). Aspects from all these pieces were brought together in two works whose modest duration belies their emotional range and force. Both of these were also conceived as larger entities, yet the powerfully directed momentum of *Coursing* from fluid dynamism to virtual stasis is maintained with



Knussen's influence as a conductor equals that of his compositional output

a formidable cohesion, while the two-movement Third Symphony outlines an archetypal duality in which the rapidly accumulating energy of the first movement reaches a massive climax whose lingering aftermath is itself a transition to the second; its more gradual unfolding to a resounding culmination capped by an eloquent chorale, then an allusion to the opening in the most fugitive of QEDs.

The following six years were dominated by the writing of an opera double-bill on stories by the American illustrator and children's writer Maurice Sendak. *Where the Wild Things Are* (1979) takes a child's imaginary journey to a suitably fantastic location as the basis for its often fast-moving drama of abrupt scenic contrasts in which innocence is enriched though never tainted by experience, with Knussen's stylistic palette extended by its often teasing allusions to such composers as Mussorgsky and Ravel. More discursive in its content and self-contained in its expression, *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* (1984) deals more directly with the twin roles of memory and the subconscious in music where elements of play-acting and even farce become enfolded into a drama whose whimsical elements are most often tinged with regret. In this sense, the subtitle 'There Must Be More to Life' has real significance, underlining this as a fable of disillusion expressed in the most understated terms. Easy to underestimate, *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* can be heard as the defining work of Knussen's career – its influence audible in every piece that came after.

The works written in the wake of these operas find Knussen's music evolving along several related lines of development. Hence the allusions to Stravinsky that emerge out of the textural dexterity of *Flourish with Fireworks*, the



endlessly inventive word-setting for unaccompanied soprano found in *Four Late Poems and an Epigram of Rainer Maria Rilke*, the rigorous yet at the same time deceptively abstract motivic writing of *Variations* for piano and the evocative ensemble vignettes that are *Songs Without Voices*. Diversity within unity is the watchword of the *Whitman Settings*, initially with piano but subsequently orchestrated to form (in the words of the composer) 'a concise four-movement vocal symphony [that] muses on things in space or the sky'. The elaborate and often refractory nature of the orchestral writing here is further evident in the second of *Two Organa* with its volatile harmonic and rhythmic layering, while the Horn Concerto deploys its forces with fastidious subtlety over a nominal two-movement outline subsumed by a gradual progress away from and back to its inherently nocturnal aura.

The first decade of this century saw the composing of two major works. The Violin Concerto finds Knussen unafraid of evoking what is an archetypal virtuosity in the most outward-going and immediately appealing of his larger works, its three

KNUSSEN FACTS

1952 Born in Glasgow on June 12

1963-69 Study with John Lambert at the Royal College of Music and Gunther Schuller at Tanglewood

1968 Premiere of First Symphony with LSO on April 7

1970 Premiere of Concerto for Orchestra with LSO on February 1

1975 Premiere of *Ophelia Dances Book 1* by Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center on May 9

1979 Premiere of *Coursing* by London Sinfonietta and Simon Rattle on April 14

1980 Premiere of *Where the Wild Things Are* at Brussels National Opera on November 28

1983-98 Co-Artistic Director of Aldeburgh Festival

1985 Premiere of *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* at Glyndebourne Festival Opera on August 5

1986-93 Co-ordinator of Contemporary Music Activities at Tanglewood

1989 Premiere of *Variations* for piano by Peter Serkin on November 11

1992-96 Principal Guest Conductor of Residentie Orchestra in The Hague

1994 Appointed CBE

1998-2002 Music Director of London Sinfonietta (now Conductor Laureate)

2002 Premiere of Violin Concerto with Pinchas Zukerman and Pittsburgh SO


2005 Music Director of Ojai Music Festival

2009-14 Artist in Association with BBC SO

2014 Inaugural Richard Rodney Bennett Professor of Music at Royal Academy of Music

movements conjuring up associations with the traditional concerto format as also the expressive follow-through of the concert aria. Appreciably removed from such concerns is his Requiem – its subtitle 'Songs for Sue' referring to the composer's former wife, whose early death provided the catalyst for these settings of WH Auden, Rilke and Antonio Machado along with lines assembled from several Emily Dickinson poems, so resulting in a continuous sequence whose eloquent writing for soprano is enhanced by burnished ensemble textures. Since then, the only notable new piece has been *Ophelia's Last Dance* (2010) – an evocative yet arguably misleading title for this substantial piano 'étude', which draws on a melody dating back several decades and which acts as a refrain in the context of other dance-fragments that merge into a sequence as arresting as it is affecting.

Mention should also be made of Knussen's activities as a conductor, in which capacity he has enjoyed lengthy associations with the London Sinfonietta, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and the BBC Symphony and Cleveland orchestras. While the focus has always been on post-war music, including notable premieres of composers ranging from Elliott Carter to Julian Anderson, his repertoire extends at least as far back as Schumann's *Rhenish* Symphony. No other living conductor has revealed the underlying originality and sheer emotional power of Elgar's *Falstaff* so completely, while his procedure of repeating short but seminal pieces by such composers as Stravinsky and Webern amply confirms his willingness to be flexible with concert programming in the interest of the music at hand. For more than a decade he enjoyed an active recording schedule with Deutsche Grammophon, and it is to be hoped several projects still to be issued (including music by Busoni and Schoenberg) will yet see release. For his service to unfamiliar and contemporary music alone, Knussen has placed so many listeners in his debt.

As to the future, there are long-standing plans for concertos for cello and piano, while large-scale commissions for the Cleveland and Philadelphia orchestras are similarly in progress. His output has long seemed destined to remain small, but better to compose three dozen pieces, most of which enjoy frequent revival, than 300 which remain the preserve of work-listings. Heading into his mid-sixties, indeed, Knussen's all-round reputation could scarcely be higher. 

KNUSSEN ON RECORD

Three of the best Knussen recordings



Symphonies Nos 2 and 3, etc

Sols; London Sinfonietta / Knussen

NMC © NMCD175 (1/13)

Classic recordings of the symphonies that confirmed Knussen's reputation in the 1970s.



Choral Violin Concerto. Ophelia's Last Dance, etc

Sols; BCMG; BBC SO / Knussen

NMC © NMCD178 (1/13)

A wide-ranging miscellany spanning four decades from *Choral* to *Ophelia's Last Dance*.



Higglety Pigglety Pop!. Where the Wild Things Are

Sols; London Sinfonietta / Knussen

DG 20/21 © 2 469 556-2GH2 (7/01)

Knussen's opera double-bill after Sendak remains as captivating as it is thought-provoking.

Vocal



David Vickers welcomes a staged version of Handel's *L'Allegro*:

'Morris's glorious production reveals an insightful affection for Handel's musical responses to Milton's poems' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 96**



Alexandra Coghlan on a fine new disc of music for upper voices:

'It's impossible to express too emphatically just how good the girls of the Wells Cathedral School Choralia sound' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 103**

JS Bach

Mass in B minor, BWV232

Carolyn Sampson *sop* Anke Vondung *contr*

Daniel Johannsen *ten* Tobias Berndt *bass*

Gächinger Kantorei Stuttgart; Freiburg Baroque Orchestra / Hans-Christoph Rademann

Carus (F) ② (+ DVD) CARUS83 315

(116' + 39' • DDD • T/t • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo • O)



Ulrich Leisinger's new scholarly edition of the Mass in B minor is showcased by its publisher

Carus with this deluxe recording accompanied by a hardback book. Plenty of interesting illustrations and the editor's rigorously scholarly essay are joined by a probing DVD documenting Hans-Christoph Rademann's preparations from research to the rehearsal room, concert hall and the recording studio. The back cover claims that 'For the first time a recording consistently follows the Dresden parts in the *Kyrie* and *Gloria*'.

Accordingly, small refinements found only in Bach's manuscript parts dedicated in 1733 to the Elector of Saxony are observed, such as fully detailed and finished bassoon and flute parts in some movements, Lombardic rhythms and a single solo flute in 'Domine Deus' and a few marginally different solo bass voice passages in 'Quoniam' that were recomposed about 16 years later, when Bach prepared the *Missa tota* version. However, the quartet of soloists has one voice fewer than is evident in the Dresden parts: Rademann allocates 'Laudamus te' to his only soprano soloist, Carolyn Sampson (who sings it supremely well), but Bach wrote it in the soprano 2 part; likewise, the second soprano solo part in 'Christe eleison' is allocated to the alto Anke Vondung (whose firmly focused *Agnus Dei* might appeal to those who hanker after a more traditional and feminine alternative to countertenors). Neither do the soloists sing in the choruses, which is manifestly what Bach expected in all five of the

Dresden choir parts. Nevertheless, Carus enables the curious-minded to check such things for themselves because the DVD includes downloadable files of the original Dresden manuscript parts.

Taken on its own terms, the musical performance has much to recommend it. Rademann's sincerely thoughtful and engaging direction confirms that the Gächinger Kantorei Stuttgart (founded by Helmut Rilling half a century ago) is in safe hands, and the involvement of the period-instrument Freiburg Baroque Orchestra and a quartet of stylish soloists all indicates that things are quietly moving on towards a more up-to-date way of doing things. There is not the obvious theatrical crackle, contrapuntal leanness or polemic performance-practice radicalism of some important recordings of the last few decades. But the opening *Kyrie* has an almost tangible beauty and offers a sense of dignified penitence, whereas there is lively conversational rhetoric between all choral and instrumental participants in the splendid opening of the *Gloria* (the florid fugal details on 'et in terra pax bonae voluntatis' are expressed blissfully with marvellous *cantabile* shaping). The whispered 'Qui tollis' is held tautly in check and its finely balanced textures are convincingly supplicatory, and the controlled 'Crucifixus' has a clear emphasis on warm sonorities, textural density and emotional truthfulness. An ardent *Benedictus* feels somewhat laboured despite refined contributions from flautist Karl Kaiser and tenor Daniel Johannsen, and the tempo for the *Agnus Dei* is on the self-indulgent end of the reasonable spectrum, but otherwise Rademann's flowing pacing conjures a gentle sense of forward momentum without ever appearing to rush unduly, and on a few occasions he springs surprises such as an astonishingly fast yet light-footed *Sanctus*.

An appendix includes recordings of the original 1724 version of the *Sanctus* and Bach's familiar later versions of 'Domine Deus' and 'Quoniam'; in the latter it is certainly no hardship to listen to Tobias

Berndt's suave singing in dialogue with Bart Aerbeydt's supple horn obbligato twice over, but it is an odd experience when the appendix version does not segue into 'Cum Sancto Spiritu'. **David Vickers**

Beethoven

'Lieder & Bagatellen'

An die ferne Geliebte, Op 98^a. Adelaide, Op 46^a.

An die Hoffnung, Op 32^a. An die Hoffnung, Op 94^a. Der Kuss, Op 128^a. Lied aus der Ferne, WoO137^a. Resignation, WoO149^a. Wonne der Wehmut, Op 83^a. Zärtliche Liebe, WoO123^a.

Six Bagatelles, Op 126

^aWerner Güra *ten* Christoph Berner *fp*

Harmonia Mundi (F) HMC90 2217 (63' • DDD • T/t)



Interlacing a selection of (mainly) popular Lieder with piano miniatures, Werner

Güra and Christoph Berner here create the Beethovenian answer to a Schubertiade. Although the composer designed the Op 126 Bagatelles – his last music for piano – as a cycle, the recipe works well. There are some revealing correspondences, too: the songful, gently ornamental Bagatelle No 1 in G, here placed before *An die ferne Geliebte*, anticipates the cycle both in mood and in its technique of continual variation. Playing on an 1847 Streicher fortepiano – a direct descendant of the kind of instrument Beethoven knew – Berner relishes their quirkiness, explosive energy and rarefied lyricism. He bends the pulse liberally, yet is always mindful of the music's onward flow. The fortepiano's bell-like treble and slightly hazy resonance are heard to particularly beguiling effect in the idyllic barcarolle of No 5 in G; and Beethoven's characteristic chasms between treble and bass sound that much more arresting with the fortepiano's extreme timbre contrasts between registers.

Berner is also a discerning and poetic partner – never a mere sidekick – in the Lieder, which range in tone from the desolate 'Resignation' to the exuberant,



Hans-Christoph Rademann with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra and Gächinger Kantorei Stuttgart: their recording of Bach's B minor Mass is released on Carus

mildly risqué 'Der Kuss'. Güra's mellifluous tenor has lost none of the freshness of a decade and more ago. He sings *An die ferne Geliebte* with a wondering, confiding intimacy, punctuated by surges of excited urgency. Nos 3, 4 and 5 are properly light and airborne. Singer and pianist conjure a trance-like stillness in the central verse of No 2 and at the sunset vision in the final song, before the unforced exultation of the end, enhanced by the ringing ease of Güra's top register. Berner's handling of the potentially tricky transitions between the songs seems spot-on, with Beethoven's detailed dynamics and accents precisely observed and each song seeming to emerge naturally from its predecessor.

In 'Zärtliche Liebe' (aka 'Ich liebe dich') Güra tends to stress words at the expense of a pure *legato* line – simplicity is surely of the essence here. At the opening of the Italianate 'Adelaide' he likewise favours intensity of feeling over *bel canto* elegance. But with his quicksilver response to text and mood he always compels attention, whether in the two contrasting settings of 'An die Hoffnung' that frame the recital (the hushed awe of the later song beautifully caught), the restrained *Innigkeit* of 'Wonne der Wehmut' – here a true duet between voice and piano – or the sly pointing and timing of 'Der Kuss', abetted by volleys of keyboard laughter, a

further reminder of Berner's vivid contribution to the success of the whole delightful enterprise. **Richard Wigmore**

Brahms

'The Songs of Johannes Brahms, Vol 6'

Lieder und Gesänge, Op 32. Vier Lieder, Op 96. Fünf Lieder, Op 47 - No 1, Botschaft; No 2, Liebesglut. Fünf Lieder, Op 71 - No 1, Es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenzel; No 3, Geheimnis; No 4, Willst du, dass ich geh?; No 5, Minnelied. Sechs Lieder, Op 85 - No 1, Sommerabend; No 2, Mondenschein. Fünf Lieder, Op 106 - No 1, Ständchen; No 4, Meine Lieder. Fünf Lieder, Op 107 - No 1, An die Stolz; No 2, Salamander. Die Kränze, Op 46 No 1. Unüberwindlich, Op 72 No 5. Auf dem Kirchhofe, Op 105 No 4

Ian Bostridge *ten* **Graham Johnson** *pf*
Hyperion © CDJ33126 (67' • DDD • T/t)



Hyperion's Brahms song survey reaches its sixth volume with this release and also

alights, in Ian Bostridge, on a singer who was a key figure in the two other major German Lieder series for the label presided over by Graham Johnson. The tenor is entrusted with some gems: 'Wie bist du, meine Königin' at the end of the complete

Op 32 set certainly counts as one, as do the exquisite 'Sommerabend' and 'Mondenschein' from Op 85, as well as, to my mind, the whole of Op 96. Those following the series have little need to hesitate, not least due to the reliably intelligent and sensitive accompaniment Johnson supplies: beautiful playing and witty, informative writing at piano and computer keyboards respectively.

Bostridge's fans have no need to hesitate either, and the virtues of his distinctive Lieder-singing art are very much in evidence, even if the voice itself occasionally sounds a touch raw. There's characteristic intelligence applied throughout, and a sense of every word having been mulled over and weighted accordingly. But that, to my mind, also represents a drawback in Brahms. His songs, as represented here, are more gentle and mellow on the whole than Schubert or Schumann, but Bostridge just doesn't seem able to relax in such lighter numbers as 'Ständchen' and 'Salamander'. And listen to the more straightforward lyricism Andreas Schmidt brings to his performance of the Op 32 songs in Vol 2 of CPO's complete series (6/00) to hear how less can be more – not least in the way a native German speaker can have a more easy-going, less hand-wringing and overwrought way with the words. I was also moved to sample once

more the generous, rolling phrases Robert Holl (an earlier artist in the Hyperion series) brings to the three Heine songs in Op 96 and the Op 85 pair on his Decca recital with Andrés Schiff (6/93). In the latter we also find Bostridge struggling with the lower tessitura of 'Sommerabend' (not a problem, obviously, for the bass Holl), even if the transitions in 'Mondenschein' are exquisitely managed. **Hugo Shirley**

Chausson • Berlioz • Duparc

Berlioz Les nuits d'été, Op 7

Chausson Poème de l'amour et de la mer, Op 19

Duparc Chanson triste. L'invitation au voyage. Le manoir de Rosemonde

Soile Isokoski sop

Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra / John Storgårds
Ondine © ODE1261-2 (65' • DDD • T/t)



Soile Isokoski has turned to the French repertoire for her latest album, and in

some respects one wishes she had done so a few years earlier. Her voice, sadly, is no longer quite what it was: the sheen has gone from the tone; all too frequently a pulse or flutter creeps in, accentuated in places by the recording itself, which places her a bit too far forwards. Her familiar artistry, though, remains intact. Lines are beautifully sustained. Her way with words is subtle and crystal clear, with little sense of interventionist nudging. As always, she aims to let the music speak for itself.

As a result, the disc arouses mixed feelings. The end of *Poème de l'amour et de la mer* is touching in its understated bitterness, but that flutter in the sound robs the opening of its rapture. She and John Storgårds adopt a chamber approach to *Les nuits d'été*. The cycle need not, of course, be sung at full operatic throttle to have its full impact, but this, I fear, seems overly reined in. It's an approach that suits the wit of 'Villanelle' and the creepiness of 'Au cimetière', but 'Le spectre de la rose' is too delicate to convey genuine passion and 'Sur les lagunes' too muted for tragedy.

She brings telling insights to the Duparc songs. 'L'invitation au voyage' is unusually urgent rather than languid, reminding us that in Baudelaire's poem 'luxe, calme et volupté' are actually to be sought elsewhere than the here and now. The playing is pristine and superbly detailed, though Storgårds's Wagnerian way with Chausson won't be to everyone's taste. None of it, sadly, is on the same level as Régine Crespin's or Eleanor Steber's classic recordings of the Berlioz (Decca,

3/64; Urania or Praga Digitals, 7/56), or Victoria de los Angeles's performance of *Poème de l'amour et de la mer* (EMI, 3/73).

Tim Ashley

Chilcott

The Angry Planet^a. Five Days that Changed the World^b. The Miracle of the Spring^c

^aThe Bach Choir; BBC Singers; ^{ab}Finchley

Children's Music Group; ^aLondon Youth Choir;

^aThe Young Singers / David Hill

Signum © 2 SIGCD422 (81' • DDD • T)



Bob Chilcott is the master of musical pragmatism, making the absolute most of limited forces and abilities. If that sounds like damning with faint praise, it's anything but. Chilcott's is a serious and deeply necessary skill, generating practical, enjoyable music for churches, schools and community ensembles. This album brings together Chilcott's recent music for young voices – all recorded here for the first time – including the choral miniature *Five Days that Changed the World*, *The Miracle of the Spring* for choir and percussion, and the large-scale cantata *The Angry Planet*.

What's most impressive here is the range of textures and effects Chilcott conjures from his choirs. Pairing adult SATB forces – here the BBC Singers and The Bach Choir – with youth ensembles – Finchley Children's Music Group, London Youth Choir, The Young Singers – he offers everything from thick homophony to pulsing ostinatos and even spoken text against a background of aleatoric murmurings. All are clearly articulated and differentiated in performances directed by David Hill, though it would have been nice to hear *The Miracle of the Spring* (composed originally for the choir of Magdalen College School, Oxford) sung by children rather than the BBC Singers. The musical theatre-style delivery of the Finchley children in *The Angry Planet* won't be to everyone's taste – markedly less sophisticated than their performance in *Five Days* – but it does bring a necessary dramatic friction to Charles Bennett's text, frantic with fears of climate change.

This isn't an album to listen to at a sitting; breathless urgency and wide-eyed wonder, demanded by Bennett's issue-driven texts, lose their charge at such length. But as a resource, a set of excellent performances (especially of the title-work, with its demanding interconnected choirs), it's a welcome addition to the catalogue.

Alexandra Coghlan

Handel

L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato, HWV55

Sarah-Jane Brandon, Elizabeth Watts sop

James Gilchrist ten **Andrew Foster-Williams** bar

Mark Morris Dance Company; Chorus and

Orchestra of the Teatro Real, Madrid / Jane Glover

Bel Air Classiques © DVD BAC123; © BAC423

(97' + 13' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O)

Recorded live, July 2014



The Mark Morris Dance Company's production of Handel's *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*

has toured all over the world since it was first staged at La Monnaie, Brussels, in 1988. A lavishly illustrated book about its sophisticated choreography was published in 2001, but this 2014 performance at the Teatro Real in Madrid is its long-overdue appearance on film.

Morris's glorious production reveals an insightful affection for Handel's musical responses to Milton's poems *L'Allegro* ('Mirth') and *Il Penseroso* ('Melancholy'), but it is cavalier with the ode's original structure, content and intellectual narrative: there are many cuts and reshuffles; numerous arias are allocated to incorrect voice types; and the inclusion of four extra high-quality arias Handel added in his 1741 revival inevitably hinders the pacing of the allegorical discourse. Handel's third part, 'Il Moderato', is cut entirely, although two of its numbers are interpolated elsewhere (which means that the duet 'As steals the morn' is shorn of its true meaning of reconciliation and enlightenment for two quarrelling opponents). All this necessitates radical restructuring of the last scenes in order to make the adjusted two-part entertainment conclude plausibly. The original literary conception espousing the golden mean of moderation is discarded in favour of a reinterpreted vision in which every kind of intensely different emotion, attitude and personality has equal value.

Morris's reinterpretation is a consummately musical extravaganza that takes conspicuous inspiration from William Blake's famous Miltonic illustrations, mingled with poses from classical sculpture and hints of Bernini (especially in a hunting scene for the bass's song 'Mirth admit me of thy crew'); on occasion there are charming allusions to formal Baroque dances in elegant dotted-rhythm footsteps, and the set-piece dances are often architecturally symmetrical and always strikingly beautiful, with nuanced uses of

colours and varied backdrops (a pseudo-cathedral for 'There let the pealing organ blow'). Jane Glover's sage conducting enables the house orchestra to manage a reasonable approximation of Baroque style on modern instruments, and the resident chorus acquits itself adequately (albeit with some distinctly Spanish coloration of words and unbridled, over-operatic sopranos).

The quartet of solo singers, placed down in the orchestra pit, are hardly ever seen on camera. The mellifluous James Gilchrist and convivial Andrew Foster-Williams sing with their customary intelligence and stylishness. The relatively fruity and more than capable voices of Sarah-Jane Brandon and Elizabeth Watts are audibly too similar. I suspect Watts sings Penserose's music, but it might be a red herring to seek dramaturgical consistency. Even if the concept and performance are mixed delights, anyone fond of Handel's masterpiece should see this.

David Vickers

Handel

'Handel in Italy, Vol I'

Gloria, HWVdeest (attrib Handel). Rodrigo - Overture: Passacaille. Agrippina - Bel piacere. Harpsichord Sonata, HWV579. Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno, HWV46a - Un pensiero nemico di pace. Cuopre tal volta il cielo, HWV98

Mary Bevan, Sophie Bevan *sops*

Benjamin Bevan *bar*

London Early Opera / Bridget Cunningham *hpd*
Signum © SIGCD423 (43' • DDD • T/t)



The harpsichordist Bridget Cunningham and her ensemble London Early Opera

are not to be confused with Christian Curnyn's longer-established Early Opera Company (also based in London). Their carefully balanced programme certainly ticks conceptual boxes by presenting samples from almost every possible genre for every major Italian city Handel worked in during his grand tour around Italy from late 1706 until early 1710.

The effusive booklet-note misrepresents the fundamental issue that the authorship of the spurious *Gloria in excelsis Deo* remains uncertain. Since its so-called 'rediscovery' in 2001, this misattributed *Gloria* has now been recorded more than half a dozen times – more often than plenty of more credibly authentic and musically superior soprano motets. However, this is as polished an account as any on account of Sophie Bevan's unerring sense of decorum for what each movement requires, from

intimate piety to extrovert flair. Her sister Mary sings vibrantly in contrasting arias from a Venetian opera ('Bel piacere' from *Agrippina*) and a Roman oratorio ('Un pensiero nemico di pace' from *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*). Their uncle Benjamin chips in with an extrovert performance of the cantata *Cuopre tal volta il cielo* (Naples, 1708), although some uneven strings and the resonant acoustic of St Jude's, Hampstead, conspire to prevent this from being an ideal interpretation. The Florentine opera *Rodrigo* is represented with an exquisite passacaglia that features an elaborate *concertante* violin part played sweetly by Adrian Butterfield.

At the midway point Cunningham expertly plays a G major keyboard sonata written for a double-manual harpsichord and probably dating from Handel's Italian years. A running time of only 43 minutes is short-shrift, and the presence of two sopranos and a bass invites speculation that either of the Italian-period chamber trios for that combination could have been featured. David Vickers

Herbeck

Grosse Messe

Munich Philharmonic Choir;

Philharmonie Festiva / Gerd Schaller

Profil © PH15003 (48' • DDD)



It was Johann Herbeck who had initially dismissed Bruckner's F minor Mass as 'too long and unsingable', which is rich coming from the composer, just two years previously, of this 48-minute leviathan. Shortly before the premiere, however, he rushed up to Bruckner and declared the F minor to be comparable with Beethoven's *Missa solennis* as 'the only two Masses I know'. This verdict is hardly nearer the mark, but in the stylistic space between them Herbeck effortfully squeezed his own work, another *missa solennis* in genre, similar in dimensions to Schubert's sublime pair of late Masses (it was Herbeck who had unearthed and premiered Schubert's *Unfinished*) while behaving more like Hummel's chorally strenuous Mass in D, if lacking his gift for a tune.

The soloists make their absence most sorely felt in the multipart panels of *Gloria* and *Credo*, which live up to Hanslick's praise for the Mass 'as a uniform whole and on a grand scale, serious and dignified'. It is precisely their uniformity and furrowed-brow solemnity (try the fugue subject of 'Cum Sancto Spiritu', 8'30" into the *Gloria*

for a spirit-sapping experience) that distinguish Herbeck as a conductor-composer-epigone from his models in Bruckner and (in the orchestration) Brahms.

For a large symphonic chorus, the Munich Philharmonic Choir acquit themselves well in unfamiliar music which challenges stamina and concentration more than technique. Tuning flags a little in the *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*: a shame, as they are the most distinctive and inventively relaxed movements. Having unearthed the Mass in Vienna's National Library, Gerd Schaller directs it with conviction, though a leaner, less devout performance might do the work more favours outside its native land. Peter Quantrill

Hiller • Pergolesi

Hiller Jauchzet dem Herrn, alle Welt.

Lass sich freuen alle, die auf dich trauen

Pergolesi Stabat mater (arr Hiller)

Veronika Winter *sop* Thomas Riede *counterten*

Knut Schoch *ten* Thomas Laske *bass*

Stuttgart Hymnus Boys' Choir; Handel's

Company / Rainer Johannes Homburg

Dabringhaus und Grimm © MDG902 1876-6

(58' • DDD/DSD)

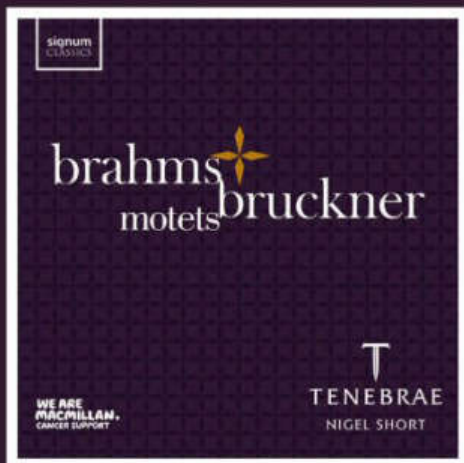


If you've never heard of Johann Adam Hiller (1728-1804), I sympathise. One

of music history's forgotten men, he was revered in his lifetime as composer (he virtually invented the genre of the Singspiel), singing teacher, writer on music and indefatigable organiser. From the early 1760s onwards Hiller was based in Leipzig; and it was for a concert of the city's music society – the forerunner of the Leipzig Gewandhaus – that he 'updated' Pergolesi's famous *Stabat mater*, using Klopstock's German parody of the medieval Latin text (softened and sentimentalised for Enlightenment taste), touching up Pergolesi's strings-only orchestration with flutes and oboes, and dividing the movements between solos and choruses. The upshot is a perfectly professional piece of work. But it remains a period piece, like Mozart's Handel arrangements but without the Salzburger's anachronistic strokes of genius.

Of the two original Hiller works here, both psalm settings, the *a cappella* *Lass sich freuen alle* is Baroque pastiche, while the more substantial *Jauchzet dem Herrn* veers between neo-Baroque fugal choruses and blandly euphonious solos that tend to sound like watered-down CPE Bach. Performances are decent, no more. The

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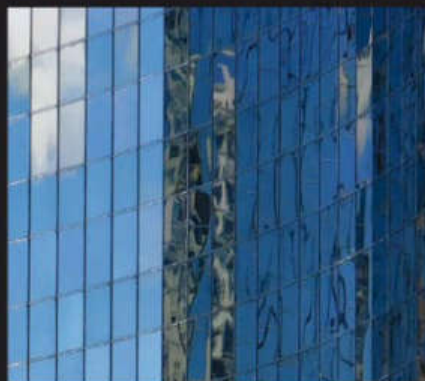
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trebles of the Stuttgart Hymnus-Chorknaben produce an attractive, bright-edged sound but their intonation can sag under pressure. Veronika Winter's chaste soprano gives pleasure. The other soloists, especially the rather feeble countertenor, are less appealing. Rainer Johannes Homburg's direction is efficient but brisk to a fault, not least in his unceremonious jog through the *Stabat mater's* grieving opening chorus. Enough said. One for out-and-out specialists only. **Richard Wigmore**

Parry

Coronation Te Deum^a. Blest pair of sirens. Dear Lord and Father of mankind. Fantasia and Fugue. Great Service. Hear my words, ye people^a. I was glad^a. Jerusalem

The Choir of Westminster Abbey / James O'Donnell with **Daniel Cook** org.^a **Onyx Brass**
Hyperion Ⓢ CDA68089 (79' • DDD • T/t)



This mouth-watering programme of well-known anthems and unfamiliar works

has the added attraction of new brass arrangements by Grayston Ives and revised organ arrangements by Daniel Cook and Joseph Wicks. Jeremy Dibble provides a modern edition of the *Great Service* and the characteristically informative booklet-notes.

The Choir of Westminster Abbey give solid, well-crafted performances and there's an equitable blend and balance between the boys and the men. Their polished phrasing enhances the clarity of the texts and their excellent conductor James O'Donnell wisely chooses moderate tempi, taking into account the Abbey's spacious acoustic. Onyx Brass play very well, with a wide range of dynamics, and many listeners may welcome their contribution. Others, however, might have reservations about having a strong 11-piece brass ensemble placed alongside a choir of 43 singers: in some louder passages, the *tutti*s can become rather overwhelming.

In any case, there is no shortage of resounding brassy sounds on the Abbey's vintage 105-stop Harrison organ. There is also a plethora of magical orchestral registers, brilliantly exploited by Daniel Cook in his superb, colourful accompaniments. He's equally fine as a soloist in his well-paced, majestic performance of the virtuoso *Fantasia and Fugue in G*. It's a pity that the impact of his playing is perhaps lessened by the recessed recording of the organ, making it a little distant in the overall soundscape.

The choir and brass fare better and the Abbey's generous resonance is well

captured by the microphones. If there's some loss of detail in the louder sections of the longer works, it's partly the result of Parry's intricate scoring for double choir. Certainly, listeners can enjoy the dignity and grandeur of the sounds of choir, organ and brass ringing around the historic spaces of Westminster Abbey.

Christopher Nickol

Schumann

'Song Cycles'

Liederkreis – Op 24; Op 39. Dichterliebe, Op 48

James Gilchrist ten **Anna Tilbrook** pf

Linn Ⓢ CKD474 (77' • DDD • T/t)



Yes, the three of them do fit. It might seem an obvious piece of programming to

bring together the three best known of Schumann's song-cycles but few discs have done so. At 77 minutes, there could even be room for a short encore. If the coupling is what is required, James Gilchrist and his meticulous accompanist, Anna Tilbrook, have the market almost to themselves.

Gilchrist sets the mood from the start, entering the world of the Op 24 *Liederkreis* with a soft touch and confiding tone. These are lyrical performances, nicely fluent in pace, though the voice can sound shallow when he is singing quietly and sometimes (more troublingly) edgy with a fast vibrato. In the Op 39 *Liederkreis* Gilchrist's light tenor is good at painting the moonlit night of 'Mondnacht' and the more ominous twilight of 'Zwielicht', but there is a bit too much wide-eyed, breathless urgency, for example in the second 'In der Fremde'. His *Dichterliebe* is the cycle of a kindly poet, who recounts sweetly the age-old tale of the boy who loves a girl (no bitter lesson being learnt here) and shapes phrases that gently unfurl in the light of a summer morning. In all this he is well supported by the clean-cut, carefully detailed playing of Tilbrook, who modestly leaves any point-making to the singer.

Gilchrist's sensitive Schumann has its own distinctive flavour. In comparisons with other British tenors, he yields to Ian Bostridge in plangency of tone and ambition of expression. Among present-day singers the leading contender, if counting baritones, has to be Christian Gerhaher, so simple and touching in the Op 39 *Liederkreis* and *Dichterliebe*. Those, however, are on different discs. For all three cycles at one go, Gilchrist makes a good-value recommendation.

Richard Fairman

Schumann

Das Paradies und die Peri, Op 50

Sally Matthews, Kate Royal sops **Bernarda Fink** contr **Mark Padmore, Andrew Staples** tens **Florian Boesch** bass **London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle**

LSO Live Ⓢ ② Ⓢ (+ Ⓢ) LSO0782

(88' • DDD/DSD • T/t • DSD/24-bit 96kHz FLAC, 16-bit 44.1kHz WAV or 320kbps MP3). Recorded live at the Barbican, London, January 11, 2015



This release should be about several things: primarily Simon Rattle's freshly

confirmed artistic relationship with the LSO – this is their first collaboration on the orchestra's own label – and his continuing to fight the cause of Schumann's unfashionable secular cantata. Yet the first thing it does, to my ears at least, is raise afresh the question of whether London needs a new concert hall. LSO Live's engineers have often struggled in the bright, constricted-sounding Barbican Hall, and the engineering on this release is a drawback. The sound is opaque and contained, the singers – the three women in particular – unflatteringly placed in the sonic spotlight.

It's a real shame, for there's no hiding either Rattle's eloquent advocacy of the work or the encouraging signs regarding his rapport with the orchestra, who play superbly for him. Phrases are invariably beautifully turned, and there is evidence of real care having been taken throughout (listen, for example, to the beautifully gauged *staccato* minims at the beginning of No 9, 'Die Peri sah Mal der Wande'). There's a spring in the step of the whole performance that is just what the piece needs. Throughout, the emphasis is on the poetic sincerity and musical invention of Schumann's score, which manages in large part to redeem the pious mawkishness – and much else besides – that make Thomas Moore's text rather difficult to swallow.

In terms of tempi, Rattle is broad when required, but is often on the swift side in the faster movements: the martial music in Part 1 (where Harnoncourt is strangely reticent) is full of swagger, while Schumann's *sehr lebhaft* markings are certainly always 'very lively' as suggested, perhaps rather breathlessly so on occasion. Certainly Sally Matthews's Peri doesn't seem to be able to do much more with her joyous finale than keep up. But in truth she never sounds terribly comfortable. Her bright voice, as captured here, comes across as glary and tremulous, and she suffers from comparison with Harnoncourt's



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Simon Rattle rehearses the London Symphony Orchestra and soloists ahead of their Barbican performance of Schumann's *Das Paradies und die Peri*

Dorothea Röschmann (particularly in terms of what can be done with the words) and Gardiner's Barbara Bonney (in terms of sheer vocal purity and allure), let alone the young Karita Matilla on Gerd Albrecht's sadly unavailable Supraphon set (11/90).

Bernarda Fink, in addition, is captured much better on the Harnoncourt and Gardiner sets. Mark Padmore's light tenor is eloquent, but the solos seem to call for something a little more heroic and grainy, as offered by Harnoncourt's Christoph Strehl. The excellent Florian Boesch doesn't quite offer the supreme eloquence of Christian Gerhaher on the same Sony/BMG set, while the LSO Chorus, although well-drilled by Simon Halsey, just can't match the professional choirs heard elsewhere in the catalogue.

On disc, then, *Das Paradies und die Peri* is not that badly served at all. This release has its own merits, and is a valuable record of what was obviously a fine concert performance, as well as of Rattle's persuasive way with the score. It doesn't, however, dislodge the front-runners in the catalogue. **Hugo Shirley**

Selected comparisons:

Bavarian RSO, Harnoncourt

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Tallis

Honor, virtus et potestas. Candidi facti sunt Nazarei. Homo quidam fecit coenam. Ave, Dei patris filia. Christ rising again. Out from the deep. Preces and Responses I. Short Service, 'Dorian'. Nine Psalm Tunes - No 5, E'en like the hunted hind; No 6, Expend, O Lord. Litany **The Cardinal's Musick / Andrew Carwood** Hyperion © CDA68095 (72' • DDD • T/t)



This fifth volume of The Cardinal's Musick's complete Tallis edition features a coherent English set made up of Preces and Responses, the *Dorian* Short Service and the concluding Litany. Even at its most functional, it shows off Tallis's knack for memorable concision when occasion demands. This group is preceded by two mid-length motets, of which *Christ rising again* is especially memorable, and utterly different from Byrd's setting – a reminder that The Cardinal's work perfectly well as an all-male ensemble, as their Byrd Masses demonstrated so long ago (ASV, A/00).

The sopranos join in for the most substantial piece on the recording, *Ave, Dei patris filia*, one of the Marian antiphons dating from the early part of Tallis's career,

and the last of them to be recorded as part of this cycle. As a group they're rather patchy and this one is inconsistent within itself: the extended duo that opens its second major section is rambling and unfocused, for example, whereas the concluding passages are rather stronger. In all fairness it's no wonder that the singers themselves struggle to impart much forward momentum where the composer himself gives them comparatively little to work with. Of a different order altogether is the group of three Latin responsories that open the recording, in which the soloists fare admirably. They are full-throated and muscular, the marvellous *Homo quidam* especially so.

At a guess, this cycle must be nearing the halfway mark, and already I'm curious as to whom The Cardinal's will entrust the instrumental items (assuming this is truly intended as a complete edition). At this rate they look set to eclipse the existing set from the Chapelle du Roi. I await the next instalments with keen interest. **Fabrice Fitch**

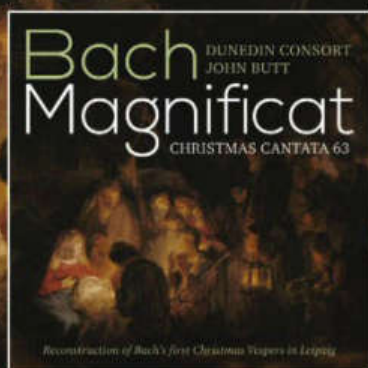
Venables

The Song of the Severn, Op 43^o. The Pine Boughs Past Music^o. Flying Crooked, Op 28 No 1^o. A Kiss, Op 15^o. Evening Bells, Op 31 No 3^o. The Night has a Thousand Eyes, Op 41 No 2^o.

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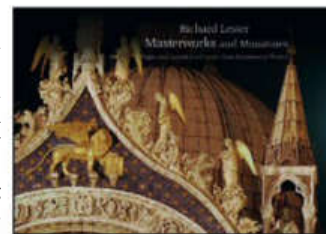
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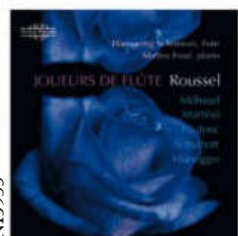
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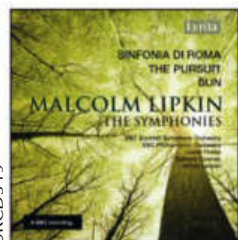


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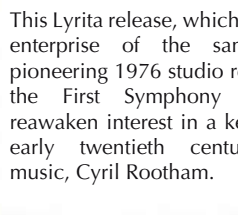
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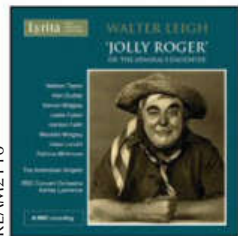
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Roderick Williams *bar*

abd **Graham J Lloyd** *pf* ^{ac} **Carducci Quartet**

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Back in May 2011 I derived much pleasure from a Somm anthology devoted to

Ian Venables's chamber music and now find myself no less enamoured with this latest helping of his vocal compositions courtesy of Signum Classics. The composer's home county of Worcestershire is extolled in *The Song of the Severn* for baritone, string quartet and piano, completed in 2013 and commissioned by the Malvern Concert Club (whose founder was a certain Edward Elgar). Admirers of, say, Vaughan Williams, Butterworth, Ireland, Finzi and Barber will immediately feel at home in this resplendently assured work, which clothes poems by Masfield, Housman, John Drinkwater and Philip Woner in sharply memorable music of bewitching lyricism, idiomatic grace and rapt instinct.

Scarcely less rewarding is *The Pine Boughs Past Music*, a deeply felt tribute from 2010 to the troubled genius of Gloucester-born Ivor Gurney; three of Gurney's finest poems ('My heart makes songs on lonely roads', 'Soft Rain' and 'The Wind') draw from Venables some acutely sensitive invention, and the cycle ends with a touchingly affirmative setting of an elegy by Leonard Clark (with the bells of Gloucester Cathedral pealing across the Severn meadows). We also get a sequence of nine exquisite songs (four with string quartet backing, the remaining five with piano), each of which demonstrate Venables's unfailing ability to illuminate the text, indisputable flair for melody and impeccable craftsmanship.

Prospective purchasers can rest assured that Roderick Williams is in stellar form throughout (his lustrous tone beautifully captured by the microphones), and he enjoys outstandingly sympathetic support from Graham J Lloyd (whose pianism is of a very high order) and the Carducci Quartet (one of the most talented emerging ensembles around at present). The composer supplies his own personable and insightful booklet-notes; full texts are included. No lover of the early-20th-century English art song or pastoral tradition should fail to investigate this notable issue. **Andrew Achenbach**

'Concert celeste'

Anonymous repertoire connected with medieval cathedrals in the ecclesiastical province of Sens, France, spanning several centuries from Gregorian neumes to Renaissance polyphony **Ensemble Obsidienne / Emmanuel Bonnardot** Eloquentia © EL1544 (65' • DDD)



With the approach of the year's end comes this smorgasbord of seasonal fare focusing

on four of the 12 days of Christmas – Christmas itself, St Stephen's, New Year and Epiphany. Mixing voices and instruments has always been part of Obsidienne's modus operandi; here, the festive theme may account for the greater prominence of the latter. The narrow liturgical time span is offset by the wide range of repertoire, which covers everything from Notre Dame-style organum and conductus to early Dufay, plainchant to English carols, and Italian *laude* to the French tenor motets of the *Roman de Fauvel*. The performances are lively and well judged for the most part, but in the opening sets (especially the one devoted to Christmas) the shifts of style and scorings can seem a little dated, perhaps better suited to the live performances for which the programme was originally devised than to the permanence of CD.

This reservation is less telling with the sets for Epiphany and St Stephen's, in which instruments and mixed voices increasingly give way to a group of men singing one to a part. This is due to the change in focus from written to improvised polyphony, a common practice in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Its revival is one of today's most exciting developments, bringing together scholarly study and practical performance. The singers of Obsidienne try their hand (so to speak) at a number of different styles (including improvised canon); and though possibly not every moment goes to plan, it is fascinating to listen to them thinking aloud. These latter tracks are worth the price of admission, especially to English audiences unlikely to hear such experiments in a live context. They reconnect us with a crucial facet of medieval and Renaissance musicians' practice. **Fabrice Fitch**

'The Song of the Stars'

Chilcott *The Song of the Stars* **Holst** *Ave Maria. Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda, Group 3, Op 26 No 3* **McDowall** *Regina caeli* **MacMillan** *Nova! Nova! Ave fit ex Eva. New-made for a King* **Mealor** *Lux benigna* **O'Regan** *Alleluia,*

laus et gloria. Columba aspexit. A Light Exists in Spring **Tavener** *Ikon of St Hilda. Missa brevis - Agnus Dei. Theotóke* **Whitbourn Festival** *Alleluia*^a

Wells Cathedral School Choralia / Christopher Finch with ^a **Elliot Launn** *pf* ^b **Eleanor Turner** *hp* Naxos © B 573427 (76' • DDD • T/t)



It's impossible to express too emphatically just how good the girls of the

Wells Cathedral School Choralia sound on this new collection of music for upper voices. The 24 singers together create a sound that is both blended and impeccably balanced, completely consistent throughout widely varied repertoire, but also capable of such constant reinvention. Now forthright and declamatory for Tavener, then misty and soft-focus for James MacMillan, the musicianship of these young performers far outstrips their years.

Under the skilled direction of Christopher Finch, the Choralia present a collection of music by 20th- and 21st-century British composers, from Holst to Bob Chilcott, Tarik O'Regan and John Tavener. Most of the works are by living composers, and over the half the tracks on the album are premiere recordings – redressing a long-held imbalance in the recording catalogue that finds upper-voice repertoire severely under-represented.

It's an attractive and varied programme, not neglecting the familiar (Holst's *Ave Maria* and *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*) but also introducing a careful selection of modern classics-in-the-making. Works by MacMillan and O'Regan emerge particularly strongly, asserting distinctive personalities, whether in O'Regan's meticulously layered, filigree textures (*Alleluia, laus et gloria*) or MacMillan's modern reinvention of medieval sources (*Columba aspexit*). Two Tavener premieres are also of interest, the contrast between the thick simplicity and sound-webs of *Theotóke* and the spare melodic arcs of the *Agnus Dei* from the *Missa brevis* reflecting two of the composer's musical personas, with a third added by the complex narrative unfolding of the *Ikon of Saint Hilda*.

This is an exceptional album, both in concept and execution. With plenty more upper-voices repertoire to explore, I can only hope that this is the start of a continuing relationship with Naxos. What would these intelligent young musicians make of Caplet's extraordinary *Le miroir de Jésus*, for example, I wonder?

Alexandra Coghlan

REISSUES

Rob Cowan reviews new Perlman and Fricsay box-sets while, overleaf, **James Jolly** listens to some single reissues

The master fiddler at 70



Itzhak Perlman, 70 on August 31, receives a magnificent birthday present from Warner Classics: a 77-CD set

After the 25-CD collection 'Itzhak Perlman: Complete Recordings on Deutsche Grammophon' (reviewed in August) comes this exceedingly handsome 77-disc production, three times the size of its DG predecessor in all respects and superbly designed: **Itzhak Perlman: The Complete Warner Recordings** (costing about £170). As with the DG set, each CD is presented in a downscaled version of the original LP artwork, except that in Warner's case each slipcase also includes a small booklet with excellent notes by Jean-Michel Molhou, who, as they say, knows his stuff. The presentation case itself is cleverly tiered so that it's fairly easy to locate any of the 59 numbered albums (which house between one and four CDs each) and the sleeve spines are relatively easy to read. A hardback oblong book of notes, including a full Perlman discography and filmography, fits neatly along the inside rear of the set. So I think it's fair to say that, as tributes go, Itzhak Perlman has never been better served. He's truly a master fiddler and at 70 deserves nothing less.

Musically, there are many highlights. A personal favourite is the Brahms Concerto with the Chicago Symphony under Carlo Maria Giulini: a powerful statement with a heart to match,

conservative in the best sense of the term, which means measured tempi and Joachim's snugly fitting first-movement cadenza (likewise Kreisler's is chosen for the Beethoven Concerto), a real dialogue, and a meaningful one at that. Mention of Kreisler brings to mind four separate CDs of Kreisler miniatures or arrangements, Perlman approximating the playing style of the last century's best-loved violinist, much as Campoli, Kavakos, Kennedy, Ricci, Rosand and Szeryng have done on other occasions. Indeed, I was more than once reminded that Perlman pays recognisable tribute to his forebears by absorbing aspects of their styles, be it Kreisler in miniatures, David Oistrakh in the Shostakovich First Concerto or Jascha Heifetz in the Bruch Second Concerto and *Scottish Fantasy*. The latter two works are presented twice, on separate CDs, the second (with the Israel Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta) noticeably swifter and freer than the first (under López-Cobos) and dedicated to Heifetz's memory. Perlman's other Heifetz tribute CD is devoted to miniatures and doesn't quite summon the spirit in the way that his Kreisler selections do. Aaron Rosand's programme of Heifetz transcriptions (on Musical Concepts) strikes me as marginally more successful.

Other works that were almost exclusively associated with Heifetz before Perlman recorded them are Sinding's Suite in D and the Conus Concerto. Both performances combine ravishing tone with lightning bow-work, much as Heifetz's own versions do, except that that clinching level of intensity or searing edge that kept the older player so securely at the centre of your attention is missing. Of course, Heifetz's engineers saw to it that their star violinist was way up front, balance-wise, and EMI's producer Suvi Raj Grubb wasn't going to miss out when it came to keeping Perlman securely in the aural limelight. After all, if you've got it, flaunt it. All of these recordings have been newly remastered at Abbey Road by Andrew Walter and I doubt that they will ever sound better than they do here.

The repertoire covered ranges from immaculate solo Bach to jazzy Bernstein and folksy klezmer, taking in along the way warmly cosseted Baroque, standard concerto repertoire, various virtuoso concertos and 20th-century concertos by Barber, Bartók, Khachaturian and Korngold, not to mention violin duos with Pinchas Zukerman, chamber music masterpieces by Brahms and Beethoven and a whole host of miniatures.

Inevitably, once launched on the issue of comparative listening, differing viewpoints beg for attention. Take Beethoven's *Archduke* Trio, part of a complete Ashkenazy-Perlman-Harrell Beethoven trio cycle dating from between 1979 and 1988 in recordings shared between New York's Manhattan Center and London's Abbey Road. As with Perlman's Beethoven violin sonata cycle with Ashkenazy (included in DG's set), the approach is at the very least keenly assertive; but turn to the recently reissued Beaux Arts Trio (reviewed in September), whether in 1964 (with violinist Daniel Guilet) or the infinitely gentler 1979 version (at least in the first movement, with Isidore Cohen), and you enter a more intimate world where subtlety, playfulness and, once into the first movement's development section, a more acute response to Beethoven's rolling modulations are obvious virtues. And while I admire Perlman's consistently safe hands, burnished tone, intelligence, sincerity and musical integrity, I do occasionally find myself longing for such plucky risk-takers as, say, Gitlis, Zehetmair, Kremer or, reaching further back in time, Huberman, Busch or Příhoda. Maybe the fault is with me, I mean this taste for courting danger; but compare Perlman's Beethoven *Kreutzer* Sonata with Martha Argerich with the flame-fired version she recorded with that



Ferenc Fricsay: the subject of a fabulous set that celebrates his wonderful, enduring recorded legacy

maverick fiddler Ivry Gitlis ('Live from the Beppu Argerich Festival', also from EMI/Warner), and you'll hear what I mean. Then again, you may well disagree entirely.

A fabulous set, **Ferenc Fricsay: Complete Recordings on Deutsche Grammophon, Vol 2**, mostly featuring the Berlin RIAS Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Choir (as well as St Hedwig's Cathedral Choir), brings with it a significant challenge: to find a single performance that doesn't teach you something about the music that you didn't already know. The first disc – which, like the others, is housed in original LP artwork – finds the Hungarian-born conductor, who died in 1963 at the age of 48, very much on home territory. If you fancy Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard* as *Herzog Blaubart*, with Hertha Töpper sounding scared out of her wits as Judith and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau very much in your face, then this is for you. I'm pretty sure that it was the first stereo *Bluebeard* (1958); but, aside from the language issue, the score is slightly cut, and there are one or two textual anomalies. The conducting, though, is typically incisive and the coupling in this context is Bartók's consistently gripping *Cantata profana*, again sung in German (Helmut Krebs is the tenor soloist), a blend of strong atmosphere and rhythmic ferocity, very much on a par with its almost exact contemporary, the Second Piano Concerto, which Fricsay also excelled in, and which appears in the 'Complete Recordings on Deutsche Grammophon, Vol 1' (10/14).

Another 'German language' production is the *Carmen* selection with Oralia Domínguez in the title-role and one of the most exciting accounts of the Gypsy Song you're ever likely to hear. This, in my view, is the light-footed *Carmen* that Nietzsche described as 'cheerful, but not in a French or a German way'. *Fidelio*

(in stereo) with, among others, Fischer-Dieskau, Ernst Haefliger, Gottlob Frick and Leonie Rysanek is, again, lithe, lean and lively, credibly theatrical as always with Fricsay. His Mozart operas parade similar qualities. *Don Giovanni* (with Fischer-Dieskau as Giovanni and Sena Jurinac as Donna Anna in vividly staged stereo) is both dramatic and intelligently conceived: 'L'ultima prova dell'amor mio' provides a useful sampling point. Fricsay's profoundly classical approach to *Figaro* works just as well. *Figaro* (Renato Capecchi), *Susanna* (Irmgard Seefried) and *Countess Almaviva* (Maria Stader) are

'A Verdi Requiem that will likely change how you listen to the piece forever'

among the key performers, much as Rita Streich and Maria Stader, as the Queen of the Night and Pamina respectively, shine in *Die Zauberflöte*, another performance where Fricsay focuses – but never forces – Mozart's narrative magic. The *Flute* and *Die Entführung* (Haefliger, Stader, Streich, Josef Greindl et al) are in mono, and yet, given DG's careful balancing, instrumental detail abounds. A live performance of *Idomeneo* from the 1961 Salzburg Festival, also in mono, makes a strong impression, largely through the tension generated by Fricsay and his team, principally Waldemar Kmentt, Haefliger, Elisabeth Grümmer, Pilar Lorengar and the VPO.

Two large-scale works are represented twice. First, Haydn's *The Seasons* from 1952 and 1961 (where 'Winter' alone is in stereo), conceptually similar, the later performance rather less crisp in execution but better sung overall. Maria Stader is a more enticing Hanne than Elfride Trötschel and Haefliger more engaging as

Lukas than Walther Ludwig, whereas the worthy Josef Greindl's Simon is common to both. In the case of Verdi's Requiem, the contrasts between the 1952 and 1960 performances are little short of astounding. Both wear their piety on their sleeve but it is the later performance that really digs deep, as some comparative timings will more or less confirm. Take the opening 'Requiem' (8'22" in 1953, 10'55" in 1960), the 'Lacrimosa' (5'22" and 7'18") or the 'Libera me' (12'08" and 14'42"). Fricsay's 1960 Requiem is among the most moving available, either live or in the studio, a performance that will likely change how you listen to the piece forever. Stader and Domínguez are especially wonderful.

Other sacred works include Verdi's *Four Sacred Pieces*, Rossini's *Stabat mater* (Stader, Haefliger et al), Mozart's Requiem (with a very mobile 'Introitus'), the Mass in C minor, K427 (a noble and emotionally involving performance, with Stader's *Exsultate, jubilate* added), and two German-language versions of Kodály's *Psalmus hungaricus* with Haefliger – the later, live stereo version the more gripping experience. We might recall that Fricsay had conducted the work in Munich in 1956 – the period of the suppressed Hungarian uprising. So when at the centre of the work Haefliger passionately declaims the idea of death as a judgement on the enemy, you can easily imagine what sort of associations those words must have had for Fricsay – political oppression, nationalist pride and of course, by then, his own frail mortality.

So what else? Characteristically immediate accounts of Wagner's *Flying Dutchman*, Gluck's *Orfeo* (Fischer-Dieskau, Stader, Streich), an exhilarating *Die Fledermaus* from 1949 (Anny Schlemm, Rita Streich, Peter Anders), Brahms and Mahler with Maureen Forrester, Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* incidental music, Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* and *Symphony of Psalms*, various solo arias, Fricsay narrating his life story (in German, with illustrative musical excerpts), and a revealing DVD of rehearsals and performances (*Háry János* Suite and *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*). You leave this generous and well-transferred collection (selling for about £62) not mourning Fricsay's premature passing but celebrating his life and his wonderful, enduring recorded legacy. **Rob Cowan**

THE RECORDINGS

'Itzhak Perlman: Complete Warner Recordings'

Warner Classics © (77 discs) 2564 61506-9

'Ferenc Fricsay: Complete Recordings for Deutsche Grammophon, Vol 2'

DG © (38 discs) 479 4641GB38

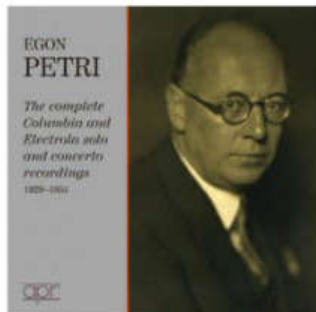


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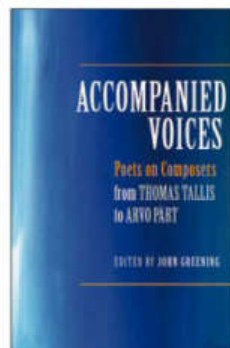
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An appealing trio of reissues from Heritage restores the work of three great artists. The doyenne of French harpsichordists, **Huguette Dreyfus**, plays Bach's six keyboard partitas (BWV825-30) in recordings originally made by Denon in Tokyo in 1983. Dreyfus pupil Orhan Memed offers an affectionate note about his teacher and Gavin Dixon writes about the music. Dreyfus's music-making is creditably straightforward, in the sense that you feel her service is first and foremost to Bach, yet she always has something to say. This is an enormously enjoyable and thought-provoking release.

Admirers of superior Lieder-singing will also want to acquire a two-disc set of **Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau's** 1951 and 1955 recordings of Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*, partnered by Gerald Moore. His voice was fresh and youthful, and the poetry comes across without the more interventionist approach of Fischer-Dieskau's later recordings (an approach I also respond to!). Of the two performances, the *Schöne Müllerin* is the more engaging, and Moore's piano-playing is pure joy.

A wonderful note by Tully Potter adorns another two-CD set from Heritage, the reissue of two LPs from Saga, first released in 1965 and '66, celebrating **The Voice of Janet Baker**, supplemented by the first release of a BBC studio recital broadcast in February 1961, with Ernest Lush at the piano. The first disc, with Martin

'Bryn Terfel captures the heart-breaking soul of Sea Drift to perfection'

Isepp as partner, includes Schumann's *Frauenliebe und -leben* in a performance of glorious insight, humanity and beauty of voice. The rapture as the cycle starts is almost overwhelming – what a magnificent Lieder-singer she was! The Schubert and Brahms songs are equally fine – I love her 'Von ewiger Liebe' (Brahms), which ends the group in a state of ecstatic excitement. The BBC recital is fascinating in that it predates Baker's solo operatic career but already reveals a superb communicator. The second disc features British songs, as well as another group of Brahms. Baker was always magnificent singing in her native tongue, and her diction is second to none. From the poise of Vaughan Williams's 'The Call' (from *Five Mystical Songs*) to the poignancy of Cecil Armstrong Gibbs's 'This is a sacred city' and 'Love is a sickness', her ability to lift a poem into song is hugely impressive. The BBC recital is also mandatory



Richard Hickox's profound sympathy for British choral music makes for a fine quartet of Chandos reissues

listening for Baker fans – a young voice, lighter in timbre than it became, used with intelligence and great beauty.

Late in her career, Dame Janet worked often with the conductor **Richard Hickox**, and he's the subject of a quartet of reissues from Chandos as part of its 'Hickox Legacy'. Hickox's early death still saddens me, as I felt he was just on the brink of a huge international career, and his service to British music was astounding – the four discs here are all of British music. A programme of **Delius's** *Sea Drift* (with Bryn Terfel), *Songs of Farewell* and *Songs of Sunset*, all with the Waynflete Singers, Southern Voices and the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus and Orchestra, took *Gramophone's* Choral Award in 1994 and still sounds very fine. Terfel captures the heartbreaking soul of *Sea Drift* to perfection and Hickox is a master of this repertoire, drawing some glorious singing from the massed choruses. Great sound courtesy of the Couzenses, *père et fils*, too.

Elgar's *The Kingdom* has acquired a powerful rival since its release in 1989 in the form of Sir Mark Elder's superb Hallé recording, which took our 2011 Choral Award. Hickox's is a fine performance though probably cedes to both Boult's and Elder's versions for its solo quartet: Margaret Price, for Boult, is incomparable and Elder's quartet impressive. Hickox, though, fields his London Symphony Chorus, who sing superbly.

Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* has had some very fine recordings down the years – I've always been fond of Sir Colin Davis's Philips recording, and André Previn's RPO disc was *Gramophone's* Collection choice in July 2014. Hickox is given fabulous sound by Chandos but the performance – with its

all-black solo quartet (a nice idea though it doesn't bring anything special on disc) – never quite hits the mark.

Vaughan Williams's operas remain rarities, so a disc that includes the one-act *Riders to the Sea* is welcome, if that's quite the word for something so bleak (at the end of the opera all the men are drowned as the sea exerts its power). It's based on a play by JM Synge (he of *The Playboy of the Western World* fame) and is set on an island off the west coast of Ireland. It's a powerful work that hints at greatness and Hickox's grasp of the slow ineluctability of the drama is mightily impressive. *Flos campi* with Philip Dukes as viola soloist is very fine and the *Household Music* completes a winning disc. And, to Chandos's credit, full texts are contained in all of these reissues. **James Jolly**

THE RECORDINGS

Bach Partitas, BWV825-30 **Huguette Dreyfus**
Heritage © ② HTGCD292/3

Schubert *Die schöne Müllerin*. *Winterreise*
Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau; Gerald Moore
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The Voice of Janet Baker *Lieder and Songs*
Janet Baker; Martin Isepp; Ernest Lush
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Delius *Sea Drift*. *Songs of Farewell*. *Songs of Sunset*
Sols; Chor; Bournemouth SO / Richard Hickox
Chandos Classic ④ CHAN10868

Elgar *The Kingdom*. *Sospiri*. *Sursum corda*
Sols; London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra / Richard Hickox
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Tippett *A Child of Our Time* **Sols; London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra / Richard Hickox**
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Vaughan Williams *Riders to the Sea*. *Household Music*. *Flos campi* **Northern Sinfonia / Richard Hickox**
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Opera



Hugo Shirley on Jonas Kaufmann's Puccini recital, 'Nessun dorma':

'There are few quibbles with the title-track, delivered with his trademark purring, mahogany-tinged tone' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 110**



Mike Ashman on Solti's 1963 Proms *Götterdämmerung* Act 3:

'Solti's handling surely inspired the stereo production used at this point in the subsequent Decca studio recording' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 116**

Bartholomée

Oedipe sur la route

José van Dam *bass-bar* Oedipe
Valentina Valente *sop* Antigone
Jean-Francis Monvoisin *ten* Clios
Hanna Schaer *mez* Diotine
Ruby Philogene *mez* Calliope
Nabil Suliman *bar* Le Chef du Village
Jean-Guy Devienne *bass* Polynice
Marc Coulon *ten* Étéocle
Elise Gäbele *sop* Ilyssa
Luc de Meulenaere *ten* Un Vigneron
Nicolas Bauchau *ten* Le Messager
Paul Gérimon *bass* Thésée
Florence Fischer *sop* Ismène
Claudio Graisman *voc* Créon
La Monnaie Chorus and Symphony Orchestra /
Daniele Callegari

Evidence (M) ② EVCD011 (133' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live, March 2003



Not so long ago, many new operas sought gravitas by basing themselves

on wordy epics by known contemporary novelists centred on some transcendently important literary figure. Henry Bauchau is certainly well known to Francophone Belgian literati. Here we have composer/conductor Pierre Bartholomée's setting of Bauchau's libretto from his own novel. It features Sophocles's Oedipus imagined mid-route between the events of his return to Thebes in *Oedipus Rex* and his latter days in *Oedipus at Colonus*, and still in cahoots with most of the characters familiar from those plays. Of these Antigone becomes a second major role beside the blinded king himself.

The impression of a rather old-school idea is enhanced by this belatedly issued soundtrack from a Belgian TV filming of the work's premiere from more than a decade ago. Interest would be greater if the music seemed more melodically and dynamically compelling. Bartholomée's score, criss-crossing the borders of tonality much as Stravinsky once did –

and making generous and busy use of a sizeable orchestra – appears to function like the kind of film music which is adhesively faithful to text and action. His fidelity to a libretto he evidently admired feels almost too great. The vocal parts seem on first hearing to lack individuality in characterisation and give the impression of continuous recitative. The range of vocal colour that the mature José van Dam, alone of the featured cast, predictably brings to his role is even more of a blessing than normal.

The drama is rounded in a not very potent way by the addition of a character to Sophocles's cast to make up 'three on the road' with Antigone and her father Oedipus. Clios is a loud and rather ungraceful-sounding tenor, a dancer/painter living in disguise as a robber/rapist whose good looks instantly charm women (!). His story, with over-obvious symbolism, echoes Oedipus's quest for self-understanding and fulfilment: his Act 1 scene 7 account of his childhood ('Sur la montagne en face', again deeply symbolic) holds up the action badly.

The most effective music theatre in Bauchau and Bartholomée's drama comes when they forget the classical Greek rule of leaving action offstage and actually show Oedipus deciding his life's work is going to be sculpting a giant wave out of rock (a telling sequence from Act 2 scenes 5 to 9), and during his conciliatory meeting with Theseus (Act 4 scene 7, the finale).

To get more sense of the 'epic' scale of Bauchau's story than the music seems to furnish, look at the excerpts from the filming of the premiere production stored on YouTube. Evidence's booklet does few favours by completely separating the French text from its English translation and by failing to provide track numbers with either.

The sound is no better than a not especially cared-for radio recording, and haters of live stage noise are not in for a treat. Wouldn't a straight reissue of the film have been better?

Mike Ashman

Battistelli

Experimentum mundi – An Experimental Opera

A film by Giancarlo Matcovich

Peppe Servillo *reciter* Nicola Raffone *perc*

Giorgio Battistelli *cond*

EuroArts (F) DVD 205 9948; (F) 205 9944

(58' + 50' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O)

Recorded live at the Auditorio Parco della Musica, Rome, May 3-4, 2013. Extras: Behind the Scenes; Experimentum mundi Remixed



We all know that modern opera can be hard work; but Italian composer Giorgio Battistelli's *Experimentum*

mundi – An Experimental Opera (1981) spins that truism around its own conceptual axis. The subject of Battistelli's piece is work. His hour-long composition is intimately concerned with the sounds created by craftsmen, and by those whose work is usually considered menial, who normally take no role in the discourse that surrounds modern composition.

His fellow countryman Luigi Nono famously tried to bridge that gap by mounting concerts of modern music in factories – dodecaphony for the workers – and Battistelli steps that logic up to the next level by bringing noises associated with factories and industry inside the concert hall. Out go professional singers; instead stonecutters, carpenters, shoemakers, stonemasons and chefs become the 'cast' of his opera. And Battistelli transforms their everyday noises into art by placing a frame around them and trusting that we, his listeners, will take his concept at face value. John Cage would have punched the air with joy.

Ever since Filippo Tommaso Marinetti published his *Futurist Manifesto* in 1909, the idea that industrial noise might have musical value has appealed to composers – even if Marinetti's subsequent associations with fascism presented a moral challenge. Battistelli's piece also resonates in political sympathy with American composer Phill

Niblock's *The Movement of People Working*, his sequence of films featuring close-up footage of workers at work counterpointed against the intense fingerwork of musicians working – strings being bowed, wind players pressing down keys.

But you can't make music theatre without breaking eggs, and *Experimentum mundi* finds its momentum with the pulse of eggs being whisked by a baker, a rhythmic itch picked up by the one professional instrumentalist in the piece, a percussionist who uses a pair of claves to carry the groove forwards. Cement is mixed; stone is chipped; a barrel is constructed by hammering nails into wood: sounds that generate a tangled polyphonic labyrinth of rhythms with their allied pitches. A narrator intones texts about the trades being presented on stage from Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* as a chorus of four voices gossip and chatter in the middle distance. The 'plot', though, is the narrative of the unfolding sounds – a living and breathing tableaux of actions not acted out onstage, but actually presented.

Philip Clark

Leo

L'ambizione delusa

Giampiero Cicino bar.....Ciaccone
Candida Guida mez.....Foresto
Filomena Diodati sop.....Delfina
Alessia Martino mez.....Laurina
Riccardo Gagliardi ten.....Lupino
Federica Carnevale mez.....Silvio
Michela Antenucci sop.....Cintia
Chorus of Teatro Petruzzelli, Bari; Orchestra ICO della Magna Grecia di Taranto / Antonio Greco
 Dynamic ③ CDS7677 (172' • DDD)
 Recorded live 2013



Leonardo Leo (1694–1744) was regarded by his Neapolitan contemporaries as

a learned composer. His contrapuntal abilities are scattered throughout the comic pastoral *L'ambizione delusa* (Naples, 1742), which pokes fun at the country peasant Lupino and his sister Cintia, who have unexpectedly inherited a fortune; they have hired the ex-city maid Delfina because she is their only acquaintance who can teach them how to behave aristocratically – their behaviour is instantly familiar as the folly of the nouveau riche whose funds far exceed the quality of their taste (they have purchased a panther for their menagerie, and havoc ensues when it breaks loose), and pretentious attempts to speak posh lead to amusing malapropisms. A tangled web of romantic infatuations fleshes out the

comedy of their 'deluded ambition', and facilitates room for Leo's varied arias in different low and high styles.

This staged performance was recorded at the Valle d'Itria festival in Puglia. The concise Sinfonia exposes not only the unaffected honesty of the warts-and-all live performance but also an uncomfortable lack of technical finesse from unstable strings. Onstage movements sound like thunderclaps; but once one gets past these technical distractions there is characterful *buffo* singing from the cast. Dynamic's libretto (only online) reveals that several scenes are omitted, but proceedings are astutely paced by Antonio Greco. Some of the finest arias occur when the musical and literary idioms of serious opera are used, not merely as ironic parody but sometimes as potent sentimental outbursts; Silvio's anguish upon realising that the fickle Cintia has transferred her affections elsewhere leads to an impressively turbulent aria that would not be out of place as a climax in a fully fledged tragedy ('Dolente, dubbioso'). One cannot help wondering what first-rank singers and a top-notch string band could do with Cintia's long simile aria 'To son qual Peregrina' (with muted strings) and Ciaccone's *buffo* aria 'Vaghi occhietti vezzosetti', and one can easily imagine how much more crackling flamboyance could be exploited if superior hands tackled Foresto's mock-valorous 'Nel cupo seno di notte oscura' (featuring tongue-in-cheek heroic horns). Technical deficiencies mean that this performance ranks as a curiosity for those attracted to arcane corners of mid-18th-century Italian opera, but Leo's skilful means of depicting the sentimental comedy through deceptively clever music emerge clearly enough to make one hope that before long his operas might receive proper attention from higher-class performers. **David Vickers**

Mozart

Così fan tutte – Donne mie, la fate a tanti;
 Non siate ritrosi; Rivolgete a lui lo sguardo.
Don Giovanni – A pietà, signori miei; Deh vieni alla finestra; Fin ch'an del vino; Madamina, il catalogo è questo; Metà di voi qua vadano.
Le nozze di Figaro – Tutto è disposto...Aprite un po' quegli occhi; Hai già vinta la causa; Non più andrai, farfallone amoroso; Bravo, signor padrone!...Se vuol ballare, signor Contino.
Die Zauberflöte – Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen; Papagena! Papagena! Papagena! Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja.
 Symphony No 36, 'Linz', K425
Christian Gerhaher bar **Freiburg Baroque Orchestra / Gottfried von der Goltz**
 Sony Classical © 88875 08716-2 (76' • DDD • T/t)
 Recorded live 2015



Christian Gerhaher's latest album was recorded live in concert in Freiburg

earlier this year. Presenting a portrait gallery of Mozart's men, it forms a testament, albeit a variable one, to his considerable powers of characterisation. As one might expect, he brings great intelligence to bear on the proceedings. You can hear every word, and when he's at his best, you sense the complete character behind the individual aria.

The recital proceeds by patterns of contrast and juxtaposition. Leporello's relationship with Don Giovanni is nicely portrayed as symbiotic, as the catalogue aria, oozing cynicism and vicarious envy, gives way to a serenade that smiles and glints with an aristocratic anticipation of pleasure. Gerhaher's Don, it becomes apparent, is a self-serving chameleon of a man, suavely and convincingly pulling the wool over Masetto's eyes in 'Metà di voi qua vadano', after revealing an aggressive streak in 'Fin ch'an del vino'. Leporello's sullen resentment is thrown into relief by Figaro's politically righteous anger. Proletarian Papageno, literally isolated at the recital's midpoint, is sad, vulnerable and touchingly sweet.

The disc's strengths, however, come at a price. Some of the arias ideally need a bass-baritone and consequently lie fractionally low. Though superb in his native German, Gerhaher's emphatic way with Italian results in his sometimes singing off the text at the expense of the line. I expected more from his Count Almaviva than the conventional lofty anger of his 'Hai già vinta la causa', and his Guglielmo, viewed as essentially unimaginative, lacks swagger, which makes him rather dull.

The Freiburg Baroque Orchestra, directed by leader Gottfried von der Goltz, are lithe, persuasive accompanists, while Kristian Bezuidenhout makes a guest appearance, playing both the fortepiano and Papageno's bells. Von der Goltz turns conductor for the *Linz* Symphony, meanwhile, its movements, oddly reordered, separating the various groups of arias. This was apparently Gerhaher's idea, supposedly to enhance the concert's emotional trajectory, though more pertinently, perhaps, to provide him with suitable breaks in a demanding programme. Papageno's final aria, which has no formal close, segues nicely into the Minuet. The rest of it, I'm afraid, just gets in the way.

Tim Ashley

Offenbach

La Belle Hélène

Jennifer Larmore *mez*Hélène
 Jun-Sang Han *ten* Paris
 Peter Galliard *ten* Ménélas
 Viktor Rud *bar* Agamemnon
 Christian Miedl *bar* Calchas
 Rebecca Jo Loeb *mez* Oreste
 Anat Edri *sop* Bacchis

Hamburg State Opera Chorus; Hamburg

Philharmonic Orchestra / Gerrit Priessnitz

Stage director **Renaud Doucet**

Video director **Marcus Richardt**

C Major Entertainment © DVD 730908;

© 731004 (117 • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O • S/s)

Recorded live at the Hamburg State Opera,

October 2 & 5, 2014



Although this comes from Hamburg, it's *La Belle Hélène* and not *Die schöne Helena*. The director-cum-

choreographer Renaud Doucet and his designer André Barbe are French Canadians, and this show has an effervescence to rival Laurent Pelly's scintillating version with Marc Minkowski at the Châtelet in Paris. In both productions we are a long way from ancient Greece: not that it matters, as the librettists Meilhac and Halévy were tilting not at Homeric heroes but at the extravagance and corruption of Napoleon III's Second Empire. Here the setting is the 1960s. During the Overture, people gather on the shore. A young man is thrown an apple, which he munches; a young woman has a fall and is stretched up the gangplank of a passenger liner. The action, which takes place on board ship, is – perhaps – all in her dreams.

The young woman is Helen and the young man, of course, is Paris. In a dazzling array of costumes, flaunting an impressive décolletage, Jennifer Larmore submits joyfully to her transition from frustrated wife to seduced and abducted lover, blaming it all on Fate. She sings and acts with great vivacity without going over the top (save for a hyper-exaggerated cadenza near the end). Paris, in an improbably curly blond wig, is played by Jun-Sang Han. He is an accomplished actor but his singing – of 'Au mont Ida', for instance – is a little raw. The 'Dream' duet with Helen goes well, though, and he is funny when he reappears as the Grand Augur of Venus, bearded with Afro hair. Calchas, the Grand Augur of Jupiter, is played by Christian Miedl as the ship's captain. He and Viktor Rud's Agamemnon fool around amusingly; Peter Galliard as the cuckolded Menelaus is on a

par with the veteran Michel Sénéchal on the Minkowski recording.

The sets and costumes are poster-bright. A picture of her parents, Leda and the swan, hangs above Helen's bed. A whip and handcuffs are produced but the S&M goes no further. The gods' word-competition and the Game of Goose are much shortened (the latter is omitted on the Minkowski DVD; both are on his CD recording – Virgin, A/01). Vividly conducted by Gerrit Priessnitz, the whole thing is a blast, and bang up-to-date too: when Menelaus says meaningfully that the people will pay, in comes 'Angela Merkel', pushing a wheelbarrow full of euros to a lugubrious rendering of the European Union's 'Ode to Joy'. **Richard Lawrence**

Selected comparison:

Minkowski (3/02) (TDK) DVD DV-OLBH

Puccini

'Nessun dorma – The Puccini Album'

La bohème O soave fanciulla^a **Edgar Orgia**, chimera dall'occhio vitreo **La fanciulla del West** Una parola sola!...Or son sei mesi; Risparmiate lo scherno...Ch'ella mi creda libero^b **Gianni Schicchi** Avete torto!...Firenze è come un albero fiorito **Madama Butterfly** Addio, fiorito asil^b **Manon Lescaut** Donna non vidi mai; Oh, sarò la più bella!... Tu, tu, amore? tu?^a; Ah! Manon, mi tradisce^a; Presto! in fila!...Ah! non v'avvicinate!^c **La rondine** Parigi! È la città dei desideri **Il tabarro** Hai ben ragione **Tosca** Recondita armonia^c **Turandot** Non piangere, Liù!^a; Nessun dorma **Le Villi** Ei giunge!... Torna ai felici di

Jonas Kaufmann *ten* with ^aKristine Opolais *sop*

^bMassimo Simeoli *bar* ^cAntonio Pirozzi *bass*

Chorus and Orchestra of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia / Sir Antonio Pappano

Sony Classical © 88875 09249-2 (61 • DDD • T/t)

Deluxe edition (88875 09248-2) includes bonus DVD featuring 'Making of' and live performances



This disc represents the fourth in what is an unorthodox discography being

compiled by Jonas Kaufmann on Sony Classical. His *Gramophone* Award-winning *Winterreise* (5/14) and his bilingual Tauber tribute album (12/14) are now flanked by discs of two great Italian opera composers. If his early Verdi album (A/13) felt like something of a rush job, this new Puccini disc is a higher-quality product, with Kaufmann's reassuringly expensive-sounding voice finding luxurious and ardent support from Antonio Pappano and his Santa Cecilia Orchestra, whose contributions, not coincidentally, were so important in making the tenor's Decca *verismo* disc (12/10) so fine.

There are shades of that recital here and the arias from *Edgar* and *Le Villi* recapture some of that rugged, rousing *verismo* form. Those roles recently essayed or likely to be in Kaufmann's sights in the near future are also largely excellent. Dick Johnson suits his poetico-heroic manner well, although there have been sturdier performances of 'Ch'ella mi creda' on disc (turn to the remarkable but underrated Giuseppe Giacomini on his Bongiovanni recital – GB2526 – for one). Luigi's 'Hai ben ragione' from *Tabarro* is similarly impressive, and there are few quibbles with Kaufmann in the title track, delivered (as the disc's finale) with his trademark purring, mahogany-tinged tone and rising to a ringing top B.

But there are moments in 'Non piangere Liù' (alas cut short, through lack of extended ensemble, before 'Ah! Per l'ultima volta') that strike me as indulgent from singer and conductor. The extracts from *Manon Lescaut* that open the disc, by far the most extensive, are also a touch disappointing. Kristine Opolais, Kaufmann's Manon in recent Munich and London productions (the latter due for release on Sony DVD next month, with extracts included among the goodies on an extra DVD in the deluxe edition of this release), joins him for three of the tracks but is underpowered and pallid, snatching at notes to which she should be able to soar.

As the disc goes on, the standard frustration with such bleeding-chunk programming also grows. The central part of the disc feels especially bitty: only a couple of minutes each of *Butterfly* (an ardent 'Addio, fiorito asil'), *Tosca*, *Rondine*, *Tabarro* and *Gianni Schicchi*. The questionable wisdom of Kaufmann's desire to include an extract from each of Puccini's operas (minus, of course, *Suor Angelica*) is emphasised by the latter, too, in which Rinuccio's elegant little aria is delivered with unwelcome Wagnerian heft and little grace. The chinks in Kaufmann's armour – delivery can be more about emphatic extremes than long lines and a voice that is magnificent but short on *squillo* and colouristic variety – are also exposed in the *Bobème* duet. This had me reaching for the young Pavarotti and Freni on Karajan's 1972 Decca recording, although the decision here to take the lower (written) option at the close is most welcome.

This disc shows that, at his best in the right repertoire, Kaufmann remains peerless today. But its being released so close to Warner's new *Aida* (see page 46) also raises a question: when can we expect something more substantial from the Kaufmann-Sony partnership? **Hugo Shirley**



Poster-bright: the Hamburg State Opera's production of *La Belle Héléne*, on DVD from C Major

Rimsky-Korsakov



The Tsar's Bride

Anatoli Kotscherger *bass* Vasily Sobakin
 Olga Peretyatko *sop* Marfa
 Johannes Martin Kränzle *bar* Grigory Gryaznoy
 Tobias Schabel *bass-bar* Grigory Malyuta-Skuratov
 Pavel Černoch *ten* Ivan Likov
 Anita Rachvelishvili *mez* Lyubasha
 Stephan Rügamer *ten* Bomelius
 Anna Tomowa-Sintow *sop* Saburova
 Anna Lapkovskaya *mez* Dunyasha
 Carola Höhn *sop* Petrovna

Chorus of the Berlin State Opera;

Staatskapelle Berlin / Daniel Barenboim

Stage director **Dmitri Tcherniakov**

Video director **Andy Sommer**

Bel Air Classiques (F) DVD BAC105; (F) Blu-ray BAC405
 (152' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 &
 PCM stereo • 0 • S/s)

Recorded live, October 2013



Rimsky-Korsakov's historical epic *The Tsar's Bride* is given the Dmitri Tcherniakov treatment in this compelling production from the Berlin Staatsoper. Just for a moment, it seems we're in for a 'traditional' production like the whisky Bolshoi one that provides the only DVD

competition. A snowy Red Square is populated with fur-clad guards, but Tcherniakov is merely tantalising us. The drop cloth rises to reveal a studio, with actors against a green screen. The Oprichniki, Ivan the Terrible's henchmen, are television executives, obediently purveying government propaganda. Tcherniakov takes Rimsky's Russian warhorse, rarely seen in the West, and turns it into a political thriller.

In the opera, Tsar Ivan is seen only once, a shadowy figure, prompting an exploration of the fine line between truth and fiction. In Tcherniakov's conceit, those controlling the media decide Russia needs a new tsar, a ruler to believe in... so create a computer-generated leader – a CGI tsar for whom they need a 'real' wife to offer credibility. Enter Marfa Sobakin, the young woman caught in the crossfire of these political intrigues.

A revolving set and video wizardry, including dappled sunlight outside Marfa's home, keep the action flowing smoothly, in pin-sharp picture quality. Media rules. The Sobakins' flatscreen television airs a rolling news channel and Marfa's mad scene is filmed in the glare of the studio. As she dies, archive footage merrily plays on monitors; one

wonders whether the public will ever learn the truth.

Olga Peretyatko is an adorable Marfa, her bright timbre and easily floated top notes making her the picture of teenage innocence. Her delirious mad scene is beautifully nuanced. Johannes Martin Kränzle's Gryaznoy, the bitter Oprichnik, is already a broken man from the start, plotting a way to make Marfa love him. When his machinations backfire, he is moving in his desperation. Kränzle's dark baritone is perfectly suited to the role. The other standout is Anita Rachvelishvili as Lyubasha, Gryaznoy's ex-lover, who brings down her rival by swapping a love potion for poison. Her rich mezzo is especially haunting in her Act 1 folksong but she's a convincing actress too.

Stephan Rügamer wheedles as slimy German pharmacist Bomelius and Pavel Černoch makes an appealing Ivan Likov, Marfa's sap of a fiancé. Veterans Anatoli Kotscherger (apart from a parched bottom F) and Anna Tomowa-Sintow impress in supporting roles. Daniel Barenboim conducts a weighty account of Rimsky's score, played by the plush sounding Staatskapelle Berlin.

Mark Pullinger

Comparative version:

Simonov (VAI) DVD/VAI4546

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The fine line between truth and fiction: the studio set for the Berlin State Opera's production of Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Tsar's Bride* (reviewed on page 111)

Rossini

Aureliano in Palmira

Michael Spyres *ten*.....Aureliano

Jessica Pratt *sop*.....Zenobia

Lena Belkina *mez*.....Arsace

Raffaella Lupinacci *mez*.....Publia

Dempsey Rivera *ten*.....Oraspe

Sergio Vitale *bar*.....Licinio

Dimitri Pkhaladze *bass*.....High Priest of Isis

Chorus of the Teatro Comunale, Bologna; Giuseppe

Rossini Symphony Orchestra / Will Crutchfield

Stage director Mario Martone

Video director Tiziano Mancini

Arthaus Musik © 2 DVD 109 073; ⑥ 109 074

(3h 21' + 14' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1,

DD5.1 & PCM stereo • O • S/s)

Recorded live at the Rossini Festival, Pesaro, 2014

Bonus: 'Making of Aureliano in Palmira'



'Who will save Palmyra?' the maidens cry in Rossini's *Aureliano in Palmira*. Two

hundred years after the opera's 1813 *prima* the cry still goes up: the 'Queen of the Desert' remains at the centre of Islamic State's cultural vandalism. The Emperor Aurelianus's mission in 272AD was not pillage but the securing of imperial boundaries against

Queen Zenobia, who had been waging guerrilla wars in Syria, Egypt and Asia Minor.

Since this is one of only three Rossini operas for which no manuscript survives, Pesaro has come late to *Aureliano* and its cargo of musical riches. The critical edition for this Pesaro *prima* is by Will Crutchfield, who also conducts the performance with authority and style. As with Pesaro's 2013 *Guillaume Tell*, a full text is played, including music that was cut before or immediately after the premiere. At 200 minutes, it is some 30 minutes longer than that on Opera Rara's fine studio recording (12/12). Yet there are few if any longueurs.

Filmed live in Pesaro's exquisite Teatro Rossini, the staging by film director Mario Martone is simple without being static, painful without being concept-bound. The Rembrandt-like gloom of Sergio Tramonte's sets takes some getting used to. Even Act 2 – 'A pleasant hill by the Euphrates' – is dark, yet plausibly so. This is dark music in the midst of which passion flares.

Unusually for the young Rossini, *Aureliano* carries a strong erotic charge. He and his librettist, Felice Romani, added an important character to the historical narrative: Zenobia's lover Arsace, a former ally of Rome who is captured during the conflict.

Rossini wrote the role for the great castrato Velluti, whose vocal variants (many of them deployed here) give the music a proto-Romantic feel. Pesaro's Arsace is the Ukrainian mezzo Lena Belkina, as handsome a young warrior as any Zenobia might wish for and a superb singer-performer to boot.

Jessica Pratt is a vocally brilliant Zenobia, full-voiced even on the highest E flat. If there is a touch of clutch-and-stagger about her acting in Act 1, all that changes in Act 2 as both the opera and the staging drive ever deeper. Michael Spyres's Aureliano withstands nobly the vocal challenges of a part which Rossini wrote for two different voices after the illness in mid-composition of the coloratura tenor Giovanni David. Raffaella Lupinacci looks and sounds well in the cameo role of Publia, a young woman who is also in love with Arsace. This is important since it is Publia who inspires Aureliano's unexpected act of clemency.

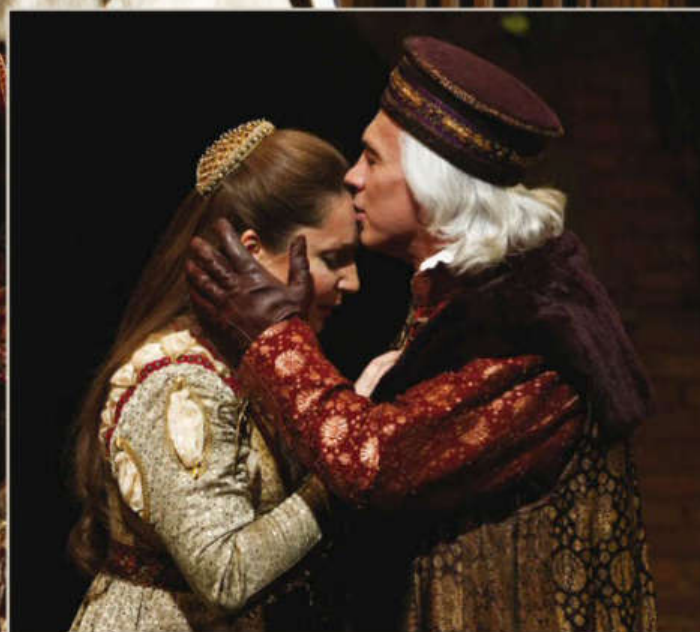
There is much to be said for Martone's on-screen after-history during the concluding vaudeville, though the quotation from Edward Said – 'Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant' – seems ill-judged. The orchestral playing marries trenchancy with eloquence, some dodgy horn contributions notwithstanding. Having the fortepiano onstage throughout

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Constantine Orbelian
Kaunas City Symphony



Critic's Choice, Opera News, July 2015

“Constantine Orbelian leads Dmitri Hvorostovsky and a stellar cast in Verdi’s *Simon Boccanegra*... captures the intimacy and grandeur... Hvorostovsky’s authority and dramatic maturity are out in full force.”



Channelling Bizet: Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* in concert at the Philharmonie im Gasteig, Munich

seems odd, there being pleasingly little *secco* recitative in *Aureliano*. But that is a minor quibble. Irrespective of the medium, this is the *Aureliano* to have. **Richard Osborne**

Tchaikovsky

The Queen of Spades

Misha Didyk *ten* Herman
Tatiana Serjan *sop* Lisa
Larissa Diadkova *mez* Countess
Alexey Shishlyaev *bar* Count Tomsky
Alexey Markov *bar* Prince Yeletsky
Oksana Volkova *mez* Polina
Vadim Zaplechny *ten* Chekalinsky
Tomasz Slawinski *bass-bar* Surin
Mikhail Makarov *ten* Chaplitsky
Anatoli Sivko *bass* Narumov
Olga Savova *mez* Governess
Children's Chorus of the Bavarian State Opera;
Bavarian Radio Chorus and Symphony Orchestra
/ Mariss Jansons

BR-Klassik ③ 900129 (169' • DDD • T/T)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie im Gasteig,
 Munich, October 4-13, 2014



While *Eugene Onegin* is Tchaikovsky's most popular opera, there's a fair argument that

The Queen of Spades is his best. A gripping drama, it requires performances where you believe in Herman's psychological descent as the desire to learn the secret of the three cards from the old Countess consumes everything, including his love for Lisa.

The opera has been lucky on disc, dominated in recent decades by recordings from Valery Gergiev and Seiji Ozawa, both from the early 1990s. They are joined by this resplendent account from Mariss Jansons and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, recorded in concert. Jansons has a fine pedigree in Tchaikovsky (his cycle of the symphonies for Chandos still holds strong) and he paces the opera unerringly well, building tension superbly. His Bavarians respond with atmospheric playing, burnished strings and dark woodwind coloration to the fore.

Alexandra Maria Dielitz's excellent booklet essay explains how the Mariinsky director tried to persuade Tchaikovsky to set Pushkin's story as an opera, 'a Russian *Carmen*'. Parallels are drawn in deciphering fate from cards, but Tchaikovsky also channels Bizet in his children's mock-soldier chorus. The Bavarian State Opera children's choir offer characterful singing, if not as earthily Russian as Gergiev's urchins. Jansons keeps the Mozartian pastiche light

and fleet-footed, and even employs a fortepiano for Lisa and Polina's duet to give a period feel.

Tatiana Serjan is a vibrant, fearless Lisa, as one might expect from a soprano who tackles the roles of Abigail and Lady Macbeth. Hers is a voice with plenty of 'blade' when required, yet she can shade it beautifully. Her aria by the River Neva, as she awaits her final confrontation with Herman, is heartfelt. I prefer her to Mirella Freni, past her best when recording the role for Ozawa, while she matches Maria Guleghina (Gergiev) for drama. Misha Didyk, a less than convincing Manrico at *La Monnaie* (Bel Air, 2/15), surprises with his baritone depths here as Herman, as well as a ringing top. There's vivid characterisation too, thrilling in his encounters with Serjan's Lisa, without the occasional spills of Vladimir Atlantov (Ozawa) or Gegam Grigorian (Gergiev).

Larissa Diadkova's Countess happily relies more on secure vocal technique than scary histrionics and Oksana Volkova is a rich-voiced Polina. When it comes to the baritones, Jansons can't quite compete with Ozawa. Alexey Markov is less refulgent of tone than Dmitri Hvorostovsky but sings a noble account of 'Ya vas lyublyu'. Similarly, Alexey Shishlyaev lacks Sergei Leiferkus's

sardonic bite as Tomsy, but his narration of the legend of the three cards is effective, despite his upper notes being pushed.

With an excellent recording – despite applause and some stage noise – this is a highly recommendable version of Tchaikovsky's opera which pulls the listener into the drama. **Mark Pullinger**

Selected comparisons:

Ozawa (11/92⁸) (SONY) 88697 52771-2

Gergiev (10/93) (PHIL) 438 141-2PH3

Verdi



La traviata

Venera Gimadieva *sop.*..... Violetta
Michael Fabiano *ten.*..... Alfredo
Tassis Christoyannis *bar.*..... Germont
Hanna Hipp *mez.*..... Flora
Magdalena Molendowska *sop.*..... Annina
Emanuele D'Aguzzo *ten.*..... Gastone
Eddie Wade *bar.*..... Baron Douphol
Oliver Dunn *bar.*..... Marquis d'Orbigny
Graeme Broadbent *bass.*..... Doctor Grenvil
The Glyndebourne Chorus; London Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder

Stage director **Tom Cairns**

Video director **François Roussillon**

Opus Arte (P) DVD OA1171D; (P) Blu-ray OABD7169D
 (132' + 16' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1,
 DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • S/s)

Recorded live, August 10, 2014. Extra features:

'Verdi's La traviata - Once heard, never forgotten';
 'An opera for all times'; Cast gallery

Verdi



La traviata

Diana Damrau *sop.*..... Violetta
Francesco Demuro *ten.*..... Alfredo
Ludovic Tézier *bar.*..... Germont
Anna Pennisi *mez.*..... Flora
Cornelia Oncioiu *sop.*..... Annina
Gabriele Mangione *ten.*..... Gastone
Fabio Previati *bar.*..... Baron Douphol
Igor Gnidi *bar.*..... Marquis d'Orbigny
Nicolas Testé *bass.*..... Doctor Grenvil

Chorus and Orchestra of the Opéra National de Paris / Francesco Ivan Ciampa

Stage director **Benoît Jacquot**

Video directors **Louise Narboni & Benoît Jacquot**

Erato (P) DVD 2564 61665-0; (P) Blu-ray 2564 61664-7
 (145' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DD5.1 & LPCM stereo •
 0 • S/s). Recorded live, June 2014



At the 2014 festival, Glyndebourne's British-made and -conducted *Traviata* was generally damned with faint praise for Tom Cairns's staging, if not for the music-making. But the transfer to the

small screen enhances some subtleties (especially of the stronger first half) and lets Venera Gimadieva's Violetta feel like a Gheorgiu-like success of a star on the cusp. The Russian soprano has, and shows skilfully, a grasp of the situations in which the character finds herself that is not only telegraphically clear but most un-prima donna-ish. She is backed up at every stage by Sir Mark Elder's fresh beating, pacing and balancing of the score – a result that suggests his recent years of work with *bel canto* repertoire and early-instrument ensembles have taken his Verdi a further stage even beyond his achievements for ENO.

The reservations about this stage production moaned about its not going far enough towards a clear-cut concept. But this apparently halfway house can have advantages. Playing in contemporary clothes in two party scenes provides opportunities for fancy- and formal dress that could be 19th- as much as 21st-century. The settings – often very dark but cunningly lit by Peter Mumford – suggest in their design a kind of compulsory permanent social arena for Violetta to perform and die in. However, the filming preserved on this DVD fails to show us enough impact upstage in Act 3 of the Carnival effect and Violetta's walk to death.

Gimadieva (whose coloratura is as consistently immaculate as the rest of her performance) is well supported by her fluently voiced if slightly stiff American Alfredo and the smaller roles (especially Molendowska's there-all-the-time Annina). Tassis Christoyannis's gently voiced Germont *père* is insufficiently threatening in his first confrontation with Violetta and too quickly sympathetic thereafter.

The Paris Opéra meanwhile hosts an efficient if idea-light star vehicle with the wide Bastille proscenium bizarrely used. Home viewers at least can centre their vision to avoid lopsidedly watching only a half-stage at a time's worth of Flora's party or Violetta's retreat – an effect which achieves nothing apart from reducing scene-change time. A copy of the picture, and politically incorrect 'black' make-up for Oncioiu's Annina, will us to equate Violetta with Manet's Olympia, perhaps another 'traviata'.

At the centre of this Diana Damrau acts out her impression of a stage Violetta rather than ever becoming Violetta. Just once – Alfredo's arrival at her Act 3 death bed – she does something spontaneous and surprising, and we believe in her love and suffering for the briefest of moments.

Otherwise too much is studied and delivered as if by remote control, albeit supported by some technically accomplished singing.

The music-making around her has class. Francesco Demuro's Alfredo shows attractive colours and a fluent and well-used top, and he can rage (Act 2) and suffer without affectation. Ludovic Tézier has class, plays a good age and captures the contrasting emotions of his three scenes most clearly. Francesco Ivan Ciampa knows how the score goes very well but occasionally ('Gran Dio...') seems subject to diva tempo control.

The Glyndebourne set is worth attention for soprano and conductor and for those seeking a pure (and not unmoving) narrative line through the work. The Paris performance and its strong musical context doubtless may satisfy Damrau fans. Willy Decker (Salzburg 2005, DG) and Peter Konwitschny (Graz 2011, ArtHaus Musik) provide more gritty, interpreted readings for repeatable home viewing. **Mike Ashman**

Selected comparisons:

Rizzi (9/06) (DG) DVD 073 4189GH; Blu-ray 073 4525GH

Evans (4/12) (ARTH) DVD 101 587; Blu-ray 108 036

Wagner



Götterdämmerung (Act 3)

Birgit Nilsson *sop.*..... Brünnhilde
Wolfgang Windgassen *ten.*..... Siegfried
Gottlob Frick *bass.*..... Hagen
Thomas Stewart *bass-bar.*..... Gunther
Marie Collier *sop.*..... Guttrune
Barbara Holt *sop.*..... Woglinde
Gwyneth Jones *sop.*..... Wellgunde
Maureen Guy *mez.*..... Flosshilde

Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera,

Covent Garden / Georg Solti

Testament (P) SBT1506 (75' • ADD)

Recorded live, September 6, 1963

Wagner



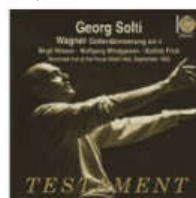
Götterdämmerung – Siegfried's Rhine Journey; Siegfried's Funeral March; Brünnhilde's Immolation Scene^a. Siegfried Idyll. Tannhäuser – Overture. Tristan und Isolde – Prelude; Liebestod

^a**Birgit Nilsson** *sop*

Concertgebouw Orchestra / Pierre Monteux

Testament mono (M) ② SBT2 1507 (86' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Kursaal, Scheveningen, July 1, 1963



Solti's Prom concert of the final act of the *Ring* was actually the first time he had conducted that part of the work in public

and includes five of the cast from the 1964 Vienna Decca recording. Characteristics of his mature Wagner style are already in place: a return to swifter tempi than those of older maestros such as Knappertsbusch and a weightier texture than Londoners had recently become used to under Rudolf Kempe.

Two of Solti's particular interests are also previewed here. The cut and thrust of the dialogue in the confrontation between Siegfried and the Rhinedaughters makes this a dangerous and dramatic scene for the hero, less of the pastoral interlude it can become. The conductor's handling of it surely inspired the stereo production used at this point in the subsequent Decca studio recording (but may also have started complaints that Solti's Wagner seemed to be in a perpetual state of coming to a climax). Secondly, Solti is clearly looking to bring out the solo virtuosity of members of the orchestra in Wagner's adventurous part-writing, exploiting the abilities of his new London wind and brass players.

It's valuable to have preserved the contributions of the younger Thomas Stewart, and of Covent Garden house company members Marie Collier and Barbara Holt. Remember that, of the main soloists, Windgassen and Nilsson were now into their second decade of leading world casts in these roles. If Windgassen is not as fresh of voice as in his 1955 Bayreuth performances for Testament's Keilberth cycle (3/06, 9/06, 1/07, 2/07), his delivery of the narration before his death shows increasing imagination and fluency. Nilsson is in fiery form. Good sound for its age and warmly recommended as a glimpse into one distinct school of Wagner performance half a century ago.

As for Pierre Monteux...although the master of Russian and French ballet was a rare and reluctant opera conductor, his love for German music reveals – in this late Dutch Wagner concert also released by Testament – a stream of prepared and calculated insights to refresh curious Wagnerites. The *Siegfried Idyll* has just a hint of *portamento* in the string-playing to keep the approach chamber-light and rhapsodic despite the 'full' orchestral version being used. The sheer detail Monteux manages to get from each section makes this most suitably a case of 'to my *Ring* friends pictured within'. The *Tristan* Prelude and Liebestod – apparently an obsessive Monteux concert favourite – is like listening to the piece in Berlioz's imagination, the colour and clash of the instruments and the building *crescendo* taking priority over the Beethovenian form stressed by more regular conductors



Georg Solti: a distinct school of Wagner performance

of the piece. And, while the *Tannhäuser* Overture's Bacchanale and actual Rhine Journey are less impetuous than one might have expected, the Immolation scene (Nilsson a very god-like guest) is so precisely phrased and coloured. The sound does credit to Monteux's work with the orchestra whose assistant chief he once was. Together with much else of his retrospectively released concert Wagner, this new set deserves serious attention.

Mike Ashman

'Alieva & Antonenko'

Puccini *Tosca* - E lucevan le stelle; Mario, Mario; Mario; Recondita armonia; Vissi d'arte
Tchaikovsky *The Queen of Spades* - A yesli mne v otvet; Krasavitsa! Boginya!; Uzh polnoch blizitsya
Verdi *Aida* - Celeste Aida; Ritorna vincitor. Il trovatore - Scena: Aria e Miserere
Dinara Alieva *sop* **Aleksandrs Antonenko** *ten*
Kaunas State Choir; Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra / Constantine Orbelian
 Delos © DE3477 (75) • DDD • T/t



In the search for big-voiced singers for the Italian repertoire, we are getting used to looking east to the countries of the former Soviet Union rather than south to the Mediterranean. Dinara Alieva is from Azerbaijan, Aleksandrs Antonenko from Latvia, and they are typical of the

generation that has been taking over the major Verdi and Puccini roles. Antonenko, who has just opened the Metropolitan Opera season as *Otello*, is already well established. Alieva mostly has lighter roles such as Donna Elvira and Violetta to her credit, so in her case this duo recital is looking more towards the future.

In the Italian repertoire on this disc they are heard to best effect where the music rouses itself to passion, as in the Act 1 love duet from *Tosca*. This is partly because Antonenko's voice goes into another gear as it rises higher and takes on an exciting high-pressure intensity. It is also, less happily, because the accompaniments from Constantine Orbelian and the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra leech away tension at anything less than full pelt. Much of the slow music is dead on its feet and it takes all the singers' zeal to breathe some life into it.

For all that, there is plenty to enjoy in vocal terms. Alieva spins a long-breathed, silvery line as she floats Leonora's high-lying phrases in the Act 4 aria from *Il trovatore* and makes a convincing, lyrical Aida, at least on disc. Antonenko's voice lacks Italianate openness, especially in the middle register, but his Radamès and Cavaradossi are impressive on a big scale. Both rise to their best for the extracts from Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*. Although she is stretched as Lisa, Alieva gives her all and Antonenko is surely on his way to being the leading Herman of his generation. **Richard Fairman**

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

Putting the music first

Jean Martinon's DG legacy, Wagner from Herbert Kegel and Ferenc Fricsay, and Otmar Suitner's Hänsel und Gretel

Having already offered us **Jean Martinon's** significant Philips legacy on three CDs (Replay, 3/15), Eloquence now does the honours on behalf of his equally desirable DG recordings with the ORTF and Lamoureux orchestras. For me the highlight by far isn't in fact conducted by Martinon but by **Rafael Kubelík**, the Frenchman's role being in this instance composer rather than rostrum maestro: his gnarled and lyrical Violin Concerto of 1960 is excitingly modern-sounding and yet consistently accessible, due largely to the skills of the violinist who gave the premiere and who plays it here, Henryk Szeryng (last available in the Kubelík box in DG's Original Masters series – 4/06). I urge even those who are normally chary of 'maestro music' to give this important work a try, especially as Kubelík leads us through the score's rugged terrain with total commitment and the playing of the Bavarian Radio Symphony – supple yet dramatic – could hardly be more vivid.

So that's the fourth CD sorted. As to the rest, further highlights feature another

'Bizet and Lalo are given the Martinon treatment: clarity, integrity and a light touch'

stellar soloist, the cellist Pierre Fournier, whose readings of concertos by Lalo and Saint-Saëns (No 1), as well as Bruch's soulful perennial *Kol Nidrei*, project a firm, warm-textured sound that reminded me of Emanuel Feuermann. Works for harp and orchestra by Saint-Saëns, Germaine Tailleferre and Alberto Ginastera, all of them exceedingly well crafted and expertly dispatched by Nicanor Zabaleta, are awash with colour, and there are selections by Bizet (Symphony in C, *La jolite fille de Perth*,

Jeux d'enfants) and Lalo (both *Namouna* rhapsodies and the *Rapsodie norvégienne*), all given the familiar Martinon treatment, which means honest musical reportage, integrity, ample clarity, firm textural contours, lively rhythms, generally swift tempi and a lightness of touch. I especially enjoyed the *Namouna* pieces. All transfers are excellent.

A lightness of touch should ideally be a given in French music but in Wagner it tends to be comparatively rare (excepting perhaps Boulez and Janowski) – which makes **Herbert Kegel's** 1975 Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra account of *Parsifal* all the more desirable. Kegel favours swift tempi, most noticeably in the Prelude and the first- and third-act transformation scenes, though both broaden as they progress and have a gripping sense of nobility (the third-act processions especially). The second act is among the finest ever recorded, Kegel driving for passion caught on the wing, and the protagonists – René Kollo as Parsifal and Gisela Schröter as Kundry – are superb. Theo Adam's Amfortas is highly distinctive and Ulrik Cold cuts an imposing Gurnemanz.

Schröter and Adam also appear in **Otmar Suitner's** warmly conducted Staatskapelle Dresden account of Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, as Gertrud and Peter. If you want to sample the sheer atmosphere that Suitner conjures, try the Overture, the Dream Pantomime, or the Prelude and first scene from the third act – pure magic. Hänsel and Gretel are respectively sung by Ingeborg Springer and Renate Hoff.

The common thread of energised transparency that links both Kegel's *Parsifal* and Suitner's *Hänsel und Gretel* extends to **Ferenc Fricsay's** bracing DG account of Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* from 1952, with Josef Metternich as an

especially tortured-sounding Dutchman (a beautiful voice, too) and Annelies Kupper a compelling Senta, her Ballad beautifully enunciated, every word crystal-clear, and growing ever more intense as she sings the Dutchman's tale. The remainder of the cast is hardly less impressive: Wolfgang Windgassen as Erik, Josef Greindl as Daland and Ernst Haefliger as the Steersman. Above all, Fricsay's reading conveys a vivid sense of theatre, with quaintly balanced 'echoing' choral perspectives in the final act. Good sound, all told – the sort you might expect from a well-balanced Fifties radio production and certainly up to the job of reporting an excellent performance. Inevitably this fine recording will appear in the forthcoming second (ie 'vocal/choral') instalment of DG's Fricsay Edition but collectors who would rather pass on Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Verdi etc, might as well opt for this neat and well-annotated double-pack.

THE RECORDINGS



Various Cpsrs

'The Deutsche Grammophon Legacy'

Martinon

Eloquence © ④ ELQ480 8926



Wagner

Parsifal

Kegel

Brilliant Classics

© ③ 95120



Humperdinck

Hänsel und Gretel

Suitner

Brilliant Classics

© ② 95121



Wagner

Der fliegende Holländer

Fricsay

Eloquence

© ② ELQ480 7199



'Honest musical reportage': Martinon appears as both maestro and composer in his DG Legacy box for Eloquence

Dazzling Shafran

Also from 1952 comes **Daniil Shafran's** poised but tonally opulent reading of Kabalevsky's First Cello Concerto, with Kabalevsky himself conducting – one of his so-called 'youth works' (the Violin Concerto, famously recorded by David Oistrakh, was another) and a perfect display piece for this dazzling player. In fact, an Omega Classics CD, recently imported, might justifiably be called 'The Essential Shafran' – it's the perfect introduction to his art on both technical and musical grounds. Schumann's Concerto (under Kyrrill Kondrashin) has warmth to spare but the most remarkable playing is in the finale which, aside from being energetically driven, includes a sizeable cadenza, the sort of virtuoso *tour de force* that in less skilful hands might seem inappropriate. Not however in this instance. Falla's *Suite populaire espagnole* parades half-a-dozen tangy miniatures, the most beautiful being the trance-like 'Nana', while the suite is supplemented by a brilliant rendition of the 'Ritual Fire Dance'. But perhaps the most remarkable performance is of a D major Divertimento that Gregor Piatigorsky fashioned from baryton trios by Joseph Haydn. Here Shafran courts elegance and, in the two-minute finale, fires away at top speed, bow and fingers virtually making sparks fly, with one run in particular (just near the end of the movement) that had me reaching for the replay button. Nina Musinyan is at the piano. There are further places to go from here – a Shafran Brilliant

box is well worth searching out if you can find a copy and Shafran's solo Bach is invigorating – but don't let this particular release slip through your fingers. It is truly remarkable and the transfers are excellent.

THE RECORDING



Falla. Haydn. Kabalevsky. Schumann Vc Wks
Shafran et al
Omega Classics
© OCD1026

Rediscovering Ion Voicu

Another unexpected delight features Enescu pupil **Ion Voicu**, a fine violinist whose potential as a soloist humbled none other than Willem Mengelberg (more about that in Tully Potter's excellent booklet-note). Decca Eloquence has gathered together some remarkable performances, not least the Mendelssohn and Bruch First Concertos imaginatively conducted by Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos; the opening movement of the Bruch is more emphatic than usual, certainly from Voicu's standpoint, which adds to the music's impact. Sonatas by Prokofiev (No 2), Milhaud and Debussy with Monique Haas combine sweetness of tone and a sense of play, whereas Victoria Stefanescu takes to the keys for Ravel's G major and the rarely heard F minor (Second) Sonata of Enescu – an appealing ramble of a piece with hardly a hint of folk music. There's also a superb recording of the same sonata by Sherban Lupu and

Valentin Gheorghiu (Electrecord, 8/01), but I'd say that Voicu and Stefanescu are virtually as good. Ysaÿe's Solo Sonata Op 27 No 5 just about clinches Voicu's credentials as a formidable virtuoso. Good sound (some tapes emerge as more consistent than others) and superb playing.

THE RECORDING



Bruch. Debussy. Enescu. Mendelssohn. Ravel, etc
Vn Wks Voicu et al
Eloquence
© 2 ELQ480 7841

Autumnal Heifetz

It seems there's no end to the number of times that Sony/RCA are willing to recycle its **Jascha Heifetz** material, but in the case of the curiously named 'Favourite Recital Pieces & Encores' there appears to be a focused method: these are prime samplings of 'late' Heifetz, and quite wonderful they are too. Sonatas by Franck and Richard Strauss, as well as part of Bach's E major Solo Partita and various 'encores' (including Bloch's *Nigun*, a Heifetz 'first' on disc at the time), are from October 1972, a live recital at LA's Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. All the magic is still there, even though the odd abrasive edge may trouble some; but the subtle gradations of tone (disarmingly sweet for much of the time), the heightened dynamics, wistful phrasing and occasionally grating attack – and more – are intact. Some may find Heifetz and Brooks Smith lacking in charm in parts of Schubert's great C major Fantasy but I've always adored this performance from 1968, these players being among the few who really do perform the first movement as an *allegro molto*. And the transition from the last variation into the *allegro vivace* finale is positively uplifting. To say that Heifetz in older age gained in musical wisdom – just as Horowitz did – might seem patronising but I think it's true nonetheless. Numerous short pieces, including a famous Gershwin sequence, attest to an elevated level of musicianship and a 'voice' that none could imitate, no matter how hard they tried. Heifetz was unique, and never more so than in the autumn of his career. ⑥

THE RECORDING



Various Cpsrs
'Favourite Recital Pieces & Encores'
Heifetz
RCA © 5 88875 05104-2

Books



David Patrick Stearns on the memoirs of a veteran conductor:

'The fact that Anshel Brusilow, now 87, is unknown to even the best-informed music lovers is no mystery by the end of the book'



Edward Breen enjoys robust essays from a performance pioneer:

'I dubbed Parrott an éminence grise, yet he is perhaps more the Al Gore of early music: a harbinger of inconvenient truths'

Shoot the Conductor

'Too Close to Monteux, Szell, and Ormandy'

By Anshel Brusilow and Robin Underdahl

University of North Texas Press, HB, 336pp, £19.99

ISBN 978-1-57441-613-8



Shoot the conductor? This book might be more aptly called 'Conducting at any Cost'.

Though one of the more talented violinists of his generation, Anshel Brusilow insisted on a conducting career, even though it gave him limited benefits and, when he was leader of the Philadelphia Orchestra during one of its peak periods, cost him his relationship with Eugene Ormandy. The fact that Brusilow, now 87, is unknown to even the best-informed music lovers is no mystery by the end of the book, during which he owns up to fatal mis-steps among his big breaks. But his cultivated observational sense and rich, poetic inner life may well send you on a rewarding search for his still-available violin recordings, as soloist in Shostakovich's Symphony No 1 and Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* with the Philadelphia Orchestra, his distinctive, narrow vibrato radiating charisma in every note.

Few significant conductors could or would go into detail about the trauma of being fired. As a conductor, Brusilow knew his Dallas Symphony Orchestra tenure (1970-73) was a mixed success, and both Paul Kletzki and Georg Solti had similarly short stays with that orchestra before him. Brusilow describes having had an odd, out-of-body experience when told his contract wasn't renewed. 'My shoes took me to the bedroom, which for some reason I needed to visit. There stood the bed, where sleep had refreshed me and presumably would again. I walked around it and looked in my closet, which contained many more pieces of black and white clothing than a man in another profession would need. I slammed my hand against the wall...pain tore across

my chest. Not a heart attack, I knew, just physical grief...Why did I ever come here? I came for the music, and it was inside of me, safe and secure.'

Raised in Philadelphia to a family of Russian Jewish fur merchants, Brusilow studied at the Curtis Institute of Music, and was about to have his solo career launched by Pierre Monteux. However, disapproval over Brusilow's marriage to an airline stewardess killed that relationship; Monteux took revenge by attempting to sabotage him mid-concerto. At the 1949 Marguerite Long/Jacques Thibaud Competition, he finished behind Christian Ferras. Meanwhile, George Szell and later Ormandy wooed him tirelessly for top orchestral positions. Flamboyant Leopold Stokowski trusted Brusilow with lists of tiny performance details he wanted but couldn't get to in rehearsal.

Symphonic life in the 1950s was hugely different to what it is now. Without 52-week contracts, musicians in top orchestras were paid so badly that some wore tattered concert clothes. Long, gruelling tours had dates added as they went along. Playing a Mozart concerto with classical specialist such as Szell was an invitation to be eaten alive. In contrast to the micro-managing Szell, Ormandy invited his players to bring their own ideas to incidental solos but was tyrannical in other ways: though he thought of Brusilow like a son, he was threatened by the violinist's conducting ambitions. The rift came when Ormandy outlawed Brusilow's chamber orchestra concerts. 'You took my best players, musicians that I had selected and trained,' Ormandy exclaimed, as quoted by Brusilow. 'With one or two lousy rehearsals, you played to large audiences and took all of the accolades.' Ormandy also had reason for insecurity: his technical limitations were such that he had *The Rite of Spring* rescored in 4/4 time. Brusilow could conduct the piece from memory.

While most memoirs are full of self justification, Brusilow is so transparent that he doesn't always come off well.

Shouldn't he have seen Ormandy's rage coming? While some of the dust-jacket blurbs on the book rhapsodise about Brusilow's dedication to music, he admits to not even having heard *Ein Heldenleben* until faced with performing its famous violin solos. He faked challenging contemporary works rather than learning them and seemed as devoted to pre-performance card games as the concerts themselves. Though he was obviously more fully engaged by conducting, his Philadelphia Chamber Orchestra, formed after leaving Ormandy, was financially unsustainable. Musicians remarked how even Brusilow's rusty fingers, heard when he demonstrated something on a borrowed violin, had more personality than his conducting. His Brahms Serenade No 1 recording with that orchestra supports the claim – it's good but just that – though his Russian genes come roaring into the Borodin Symphony No 2 he recorded with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. Yet the world's loss when he rejected a solo violin career was his gain, offering the family life he craved – in contrast to Christian Ferras, who had the big career but died by his own hand at the age of 49. So Brusilow had the life that he wanted. And isn't that the ultimate success?

David Patrick Stearns

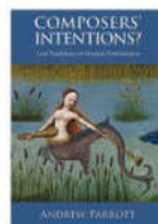
Composers' Intentions?

'Lost Traditions of Musical Performance'

By Andrew Parrott

Boydell Press, PB, 421pp, £19.99

ISBN 978-1-78327-032-3



Andrew Parrott is the *éminence grise* of the early music scene: a singer, conductor and scholar

known for superb performances and groundbreaking performance practice. He is also the author of one of the most controversial music books in recent decades: *The Essential Bach Choir* (2000),



Andrew Parrott explores questions of performance practice in a new collection of essays published by the Boydell Press

which expanded, so to speak, Joshua Rifkin's one-per-part theories.

Now many of Parrott's shorter essays on early music performance are brought together in this generous and impressive volume. Readers without easy access to academic journals will immediately appreciate the importance of such a book. As such, the Boydell Press is to be commended on this handsome and affordable paperback edition, one which will do much to stimulate debate in early music. There are 18 essays in total, central to which is Parrott's new article on the countertenor, published just a few months ago in *Early Music*. Despite diverse titles spanning four decades, Parrott's consistent preoccupation with voice types and performance pitch lends unity of purpose and clarity of message.

The title essay explores composers' views on performance practice. Parrott's gimlet eye has been reading and recording a wide variety of treatises for many years, and his positivist credentials are on full display as he surveys a vast and impressive array of literature in a process of cumulative quotation exploring notation, ornamentation and meaning. Composers, we are invited to conclude, have always had firm intentions. With these intentions in mind, Parrott explores differing notions of the choir over several centuries, concluding that it is a moveable feast. This flows into the key essay, 'Falsetto Beliefs: The "Countertenor"

Cross-Examined'. It is the very rise of the falsettist countertenor in recent decades, so closely associated with the 'early music revival', that Parrott addresses head on, doing nothing to disguise the fact that he feels the falsettist has unjustly become an early music emblem. His work in this area has the potential to wreak havoc, since his essay – containing a thorough combing of the archives – questions what place, if any, this voice type actually occupied within the diverse vocal traditions of European early music. His method is simple, first revisiting evidence of vocal ranges to illustrate the low-pitched and high-pitched disposition of many late-medieval choirs, and then surveying occurrences of the word 'falsetto' in its many permutations from the 'falsitas' of *Instituta patrum* (1210-20) to the 'fausset' of Dufay's will (1474). In each case he suggests an alternative reading to the modern use of 'falsetto'.

Performance pitch is Parrott's *bête noire*. Nowhere is this more evident than in the case he makes for downwards transposition of a fourth in the 'Lauda Jerusalem' and *Magnificat* a 7 of Monteverdi's *Vespers* of 1610. Again, Parrott's arguments are coolly logical. They do, however, require the reader to understand that high clefs are not wedded to high tessitura. This stems from Renaissance theories in which Monteverdi was well schooled, and which Parrott has no room to cover. As such, I find the

comment 'the use of such clefs is the result of certain theoretical conventions which, though of little consequence to the singer, acted as a clearly understood signal to the instrumentalists to transpose' an unsuitable placeholder for an abstruse and under-explored Renaissance theoretical point.

If we can set aside disappointment at the loss of two dazzling *Vespers* moments, then Parrott's theory is uncomfortably convincing. The third of his four chapters on Monteverdi, however, is the poorer for being printed without the essay by Roger Bowers to which it is responding. This is a perennial bugbear in essay collections aimed at the very people who often can't access journal archives to read the flip sides. Despite Parrott's careful footnotes, readers will still wish to read Bowers's essay.

Many ensembles, such as Parrott's own Taverner Choir, Consort and Players, turned 40 recently, and their performance legacy has enabled young ensembles raised on a diet of historically informed performance to impatiently push boundaries of Baroque-and-beyond. Parrott's writing stands out sharply from this joyful, mushrooming HIP-fest for its zealous, conservative scholarship. The writing is buoyant, urgent and enjoyable. I dubbed Parrott an *éminence grise*, yet he is perhaps more the Al Gore of early music: a harbinger of inconvenient truths.

Edward Breen

Classics RECONSIDERED



Mike Ashman and **Tim Ashley** weigh up the pros and cons of Karajan's 1978 recording of Strauss's *Salome* featuring Hildegard Behrens's breakthrough performance in the title-role



R Strauss

Salome

Sols incl/ Behrens, Böhm, Baltsa, Ochman, van Dam

Vienna Philharmonic / Herbert von Karajan

EMI Classics © 2 966832-2 (7/14)

Originally released as HMV SLS5139

This is a marvellously consistent and single-minded concept of Strauss's opera, and sensuous beauty is the keynote. The earlier Leinsdorf set had Montserrat Caballé as the heroine, but in vocal richness and sheer ripeness of sensuality Hildegard Behrens outshines even that example, and when one comes to

comparing this performance with the classic Decca one of Birgit Nilsson with Solti and the same orchestra as here, the contrast could hardly be clearer.

That contrast is firmly underlined by the difference of recorded sound, and there more than anywhere the new set will divide opinion. At least one can say that the sound on the new set is exactly consistent with Karajan's reading. Where recent Karajan opera sets have come to betray excessive reliance on multi-channel techniques, this Vienna recording has a rich carpet of sound. Even the voice of Salome is often

sunk into the opulent texture, with syllables and even whole words submerged in exactly the way one finds in the theatre.

When it comes to the contrasts between Behrens and Nilsson, in broad outline they are exactly as I had expected, remembering Behrens's superb performance on stage. Where from the start Nilsson tends to represent the picture of cruel determination, Behrens is seductively believable as the young girl in love with sensuality. The delicacy and precision of her singing are a constant delight.

Edward Greenfield (9/78)

Mike Ashman When this Karajan project was announced, following the conductor's discovery in 1976 of the late-starter German soprano Hildegard Behrens, there was a feeling that at last there could be a serious rival on disc to 1962's Decca Sonicstage recording with Nilsson and Solti – which had been engineered to a daringly interventionist level in terms of acoustics and vocal colour. However, some commentators – I believe you're one of them – had much liked RCA's 1968 London-made recording with Montserrat Caballé and Leinsdorf, an apparently strange choice because Caballé was already famous as a Callas- and Sutherland-rivalling *bel canto* diva.

Tim Ashley Strauss once said he thought *Tristan und Isolde* was a *bel canto* opera, and I don't think he would have found Caballé's *Salome* strange at all, though he might have joked about her size, as indeed, famously, did she. It was one of her own favourite roles, and I don't think anyone has surpassed her in terms of tonal beauty and psychological detail – in any of the studio sets, at any rate. I didn't know her recording,

though, when Karajan's came out. Much was made at the time, if I remember rightly, of the lushness of Karajan's performance being a corrective to Solti's hysteria. I was stunned by it when I first heard it. Nowadays, though, I have reservations.

MA The Karajan recording (with his new EMI producer Michel Glotz but Decca's engineers in Vienna's Sofiensaal) seemed determined to have voices and orchestra mixed up – like a deliberate antipode to Solti's separation of the two. Especially in the final scene after the dance, you have to aurally unpick the lines of Strauss's instrumental texture to get at the text, let alone any expressive vocal acting of the singers. It's more than just a question of balance, more one of deliberate layering – like hearing the royal family of Judaea (Behrens, Agnes Baltsa and Karl-Walter Böhm) come and go through a distracting, opulent fog. It certainly means that, in this 'stage tone-poem' (as Norman del Mar called the work), the orchestra's achievement gets heard, but it's neither a live opera house balance nor (following Strauss's own hints about not overplaying

these scores) the careful chamber balance you get from the older live versions under Clemens Krauss and Fritz Reiner with their youthful-sounding sopranos Maria Cebotari and Ljuba Welitsch.

TA That detailed textural layering was very typical of Karajan's 1970s recordings as a whole, as if he was striving to create a different listening experience on disc from that in the theatre or concert hall. It can seem dated, I agree. But you could argue here that its very ornateness works as a kind of musical art nouveau – the sonic equivalent, if you like, of the curlicues of Beardsley's illustrations for Wilde's original play or the Moreau paintings that inspired it. It's a very Wildean, Dorian Gray-ish interpretation in its evocation of something almost unnaturally beautiful slowly turning decadent and monstrous. I'm not sure that textual inaccessibility is solely due to the recording. There's some variable diction, with Behrens, who sometimes drops consonants in her upper registers, arguably the worst offender. With Caballé, Welitsch and Cebotari you can hear practically every word.



Karajan conducts as Behrens studies the score

MA The comparison with the paintings is intriguing. But I find little interpretative intention here apart from manipulating the sounds of a first-class body of players. Shouldn't the climactic interlude when Jokanaan comes up out of the cistern enable us to picture lifting the roof of the underground prison, the prophet seeing the light for the first time in ages and (symbolically) the beginning of his mission on Earth? You get all of that in clear stages from Krauss, Reiner, Sinopoli and (with some engineering assistance) Solti, but all I get from Karajan is a generalised rich decadence. Also, the singers tend to become neutral instruments who are just part of the maestro's all-pervading sound control.

TA The singing is very lyrical, and consistent, I think, with an interpretation rooted in *fin de siècle* post-Romanticism rather than modernist neurosis. I don't find it neutral by any means, though I would question some of the casting – in particular Baltsa, who was singing Mozart's Dorabella at Covent Garden the year the set was released, and who simply sounds too

young. The sense of mystery that Karajan sustains at the end of that interlude strikes me as an apt prelude to Behrens's encounter with José van Dam's Jokanaan. He sounds very sincere, even noble – far removed from the revivalist fanatic types we've recently seen in London and Belfast. Salome says his voice 'is like music in my ears'; here, I think, we believe her.

MA It's actually 'modernist neurosis' I'm missing throughout the performance! I find van Dam almost boring, too much of a 'holy Joe', an exile from *Messiah* or *Elijah*. There's not the dangerous edge you find (going back) with Hans Hotter (for Reiner) or the younger Bryn Terfel (for Sinopoli). For Herodias, Karajan said rather crudely that he didn't want 'another lump of old flesh', so his young Greek star Baltsa was pressed, at age 33, into being the mother of a Salome then aged 40. Contrary to Richard Osborne's notes to this set, I'd say that Karajan *did* find singers he wanted to work with and then looked for a project to put them in. So, then – what do we think of Behrens? Surely she's the *raison d'être* of the enterprise?

TA I confess to mixed feelings. She's in fine voice – admirably sumptuous, and with none of that forcing in the chest register that made some of her later performances so mannered. She sounds credibly young – not quite as convincingly so as Caballé or Welitsch, but with none of the self-conscious archness of Cheryl Studer for Sinopoli. But the characterisation worries me. It's typical of the interpretation as a whole that the revelation of Salome's monstrosity is delayed until after Herod's initial rejection of her demand for Jokanaan's head, and at this point Behrens is chilling. But this also means she has to downplay the confrontation with Jokanaan, where the words slip – 'glühender als Rosen, sind nicht so rot' is indistinguishable – and there's no real sense of growing desire, however beautiful she sounds. I still find her a rather curious choice on the part of a conductor whose 1948 recording of the final scene with Welitsch remains one of the great moments in the *Salome* discography.

MA I've always liked Behrens a lot, but possibly here least of all because of the amount of 'her master's voice' control from Karajan, winding the dynamics of her part up and down to instrumental order. (And Karajan will have been the instigator of that 'late' turn to evil by the character.) Result: Behrens sounds sensitive but rarely sensual, and hardly ever frightening. In 1948, Karajan and the engineers accompanied their soprano, amplifying the drama; here, they're battling for control with her and the text just doesn't get an equal look-in. The orchestra is actually distracting rather than supporting or amplifying. I don't always like to vote 'historic', but for my *Salome* at home I'd prefer the genuinely young-sounding voices of Cebotari or Welitsch with the chillingly graded (often chamber-scaled) accompaniments of Strauss experts Krauss and Reiner.

TA I also have a huge fondness for Welitsch and Reiner, but if I had to choose one version, it would still be Caballé with Leinsdorf. I find her characterisation utterly compelling. The rest of the cast is outstanding (Sherrill Milnes sounds disturbingly sexy as Jokanaan), and Leinsdorf, combining something of Karajan's sensuousness with Solti's ferocity, gets it bang on, as far as I'm concerned. I still have great admiration for Karajan's recording, but no longer regard it as the classic I once believed it to be. **G**

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

Nielsen beyond the symphonies

Lamenting the fact that the great Dane is viewed by many primarily as a symphonist, **Andrew Mellor** focuses on some of Nielsen's other works – which can also serve to enhance an appreciation of the symphonies

If an anniversary year serves any function at all, it's to prompt a second look at the composer in question – a lifting up of the heavy stone of tradition to see what wriggling truths, convenient or otherwise, lie underneath. Long neglected, Nielsen enjoys double underdog status in his own 150th-birthday year thanks to his exact contemporary Jean Sibelius. In that sense, Nielsen stands only to benefit from 2015's reappraisal. There's nothing so much as some marital infidelity and vintage misogyny to embarrass him but there are countless wonderful scores – masterpieces, even – that remain unknown outside Denmark. These can only lend weight to the argument that the spiky-haired Dane was a true

original absolutely on the level of his bald contemporary from across the Baltic.

With Nielsen, we've been guilty not simply of focusing disproportionately on his symphonies, but of homing in on only two of them (until this year, the Fourth and Fifth had been the only two played at the BBC Proms for a decade). The six symphonies straddled almost the whole of Nielsen's creative life, which meant there was sufficient space in between for the composer to produce countless works that advanced his style. Both the operas predate what is commonly viewed as his symphonic 'coming to maturity', the Third. His First Violin Sonata exploded into life a few years after the

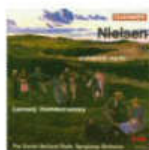
dynamite First Symphony did the same. He broke off work on the militaristic tread of his Fifth Symphony to write the fresh-aided, humorous recollection of youth that was *Springtime on Funen*.

While Sibelius's non-orchestral music can sometimes feel incidental next to his increasingly progressive and individual orchestral scores, Nielsen's 'little' pieces are far more hard-wired into his musical world view and are arguably of more consistent quality, too. That, and Nielsen wrote the only Scandinavian opera that has retained anything like a foothold in the international repertoire. Yes, Nielsen was a towering symphonist. But he was more besides. **G**



This 150th anniversary of his birth this year affords us all an opportunity to discover the music that Nielsen composed between his famed symphonies

PHOTOGRAPHY: CARL NIELSEN MUSEUM/ODENSE CITY MUSEUMS



Symphonic Rhapsody
Danish National SO /
Gennadi Rozhdestvensky
Chandos ⑤ CHAN9287 (9/94)
Nielsen's first attempt at

a symphony, aborted after one movement, includes fascinating signposts of what was to come. There's the brusque opening chord, just a touch more polite than the barging-through-a-door openings that would follow; there's the swing that would find its way into *Maskarade* and the Third Symphony (particularly apparent on this recording); there are playful silences on the downbeat; and, most of all, there's Nielsen's idiosyncratic, cheeky turn of phrase.



Saul and David
Sols; Danish National Radio
Choir and Symphony
Orchestra / Neeme Järvi
Chandos ⑤ ② CHAN8911/2 (3/91)

Nielsen's first opera has effectively formed the centrepiece of Denmark's anniversary celebrations this year, with a major new production from David Pountney at the Royal Danish Opera to be issued on a Dacapo DVD early next year. Pountney's staging answered some of the criticisms that the work is more a dramatic oratorio than an opera, but in truth it's the magnificent score that's the driving force in this piece, perhaps more than any sense of theatre.



**Jens the Road-Mender,
Op 21 No 3**
Ars Nova Copenhagen /
Michael Bojesen
Dacapo ⑤ ⑥ 6 220569 (6/15)

Of Nielsen's 300 popular Danish songs, few have retained a more significant place in Denmark's national psyche than this ditty on the country's fabled everyman. Jens the road-mender endlessly chips at rocks before dying unrecognised without a single stone to grace his own grave. The tune is easily learnt, inviting communal participation in a hymn to social justice that gets an appropriately 'straight' choral performance in this Dacapo collection.



Maskarade
Sols; Danish National
Symphony Chorus
and Orchestra /
Michael Schönwandt

Dacapo ⑤ ② ⑥ 6 220641/2 (8/15)
Few works underscore Nielsen's desire to overturn the old order better than this, a snapshot from 1906 of a changing Denmark that advocates art for all and freedom in youth. It's full of marvellous tunes and orchestral *joie de vivre*, particularly in this new recording. Not many composers can tread the line between profundity and froth, but Nielsen does so deliciously even when the opera collapses into a cavalcade of partying.



Oft Am I Glad
Jan Lund *ten*
Carl Nielsen Trio
Danacord ⑤ DACOCD730
Perhaps Nielsen's most

beautiful song and certainly one of his simplest, *Tit er jeg glad* sets a remarkable text by Bernhard Severin Ingemann. 'Oft am I glad, still may I weep from sadness,' sings Nielsen's vocalist; 'Oft do I love, still may I sigh from coldness.' Typically, Nielsen's tune is of plain, strophic shape. But the natural, plaintive melody is sufficiently strong to grow in stature as it's repeated through each verse towards Ingemann's heartbreaking close.



Springtime in Funen
Danish National Radio Choir
and Symphony Orchestra /
Leif Segerstam
Chandos ⑤ CHAN8853 (4/91)

Nielsen's 'lyrical humoresque' sprang out of a competition initiated by the Danish Choral Association for a text which would celebrate Danish nature, history and folk life - those central elements in Nielsen's creative outlook which ring through his autobiography, *My Childhood on Funen*. Unsurprisingly, he delivered a highly idiosyncratic piece full of sparkling humour and rustic joy - one in which Leif Segerstam could almost have been cast as himself.



Three Motets, Op 55
Camerata Chamber Choir /
Per Enevold
BIS ⑤ BISCD131 (9/90)

Nielsen's late obsession with sacred polyphonic music, particularly Palestrina and the Flemish school, afforded the composer a handy pre-death re-acquaintance with religious ideas and texts. The unyieldingly rigorous *Three Motets* set texts from the psalms and were written for the Danish Palestrina Choir in 1929; you can roll the epic organ exercise *Commotio* (1931) in with them. It all sounds a long way from the 'known' Nielsen in its austerity, even if many of his musical principles stood fast.



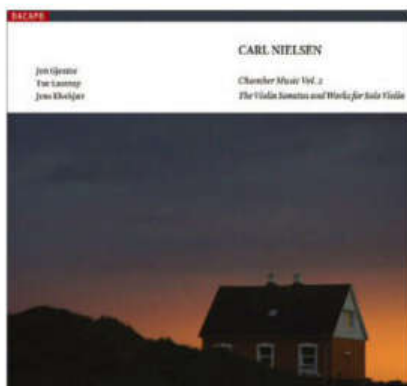
Wind Quintet
Ensemble MidtVest
CPO ⑤ CPO777 872-2
Does any piece hold a mirror up
to its creator like the Wind

Quintet? From its initial rigour to its outlandish humour and arrival at another simple song - Nielsen's own tune for the hymn *Min Jesus, lad min Hjerte faa en saaden Smag paa dig* - it is the result of total inspiration, specifically that of the Copenhagen Wind Quintet playing Mozart's *Sinfonia concertante*, K297, which prompted its composition. Ensemble MidtVest have certainly inherited their mantle.



Flute Concerto
Emmanuel Pahud *fl*
BPO / Simon Rattle
EMI ⑤ 394421-2 (A/O7)
'Now I think on the basis of

instruments themselves...in a way I creep into them,' wrote Nielsen as he penned his Wind Quintet. He then decided to write a concerto for each of the five instruments in that score, but only managed two, for clarinet and flute. The Flute Concerto absolutely reflects Nielsen's comment about instruments; all its coyness, impish will and mercurial spirit seem to spring entirely from the flute's character, turbocharged here by Pahud.



Violin Sonata No 1

Jon Gjesme *vn* Jens Elvekjaer *pf* Dacapo ⑤ 8 226065 (10/08)

We started with a piece whose opening is 'brusque', and here's one that bursts into life in its initial gesture with that sudden disruptive impulse that opens other works including *Saul and David* and the first four symphonies. Nielsen's First Violin Sonata of 1895 speaks of a composer discovering this new, curious, incendiary, angular, anti-lyrical and utterly energetic musical language. The insistence and Janáček-like discourtesy of the

sonata's first movement had Copenhagen critics urging Nielsen to calm down (thankfully, he ignored them). Seek out the Christina Åstrand and Per Salo recording second-hand on the internet, if you can, otherwise the recording here will do just fine. Nielsen's Violin Sonata No 2 is more refined and celebrated, but this first little treasure seems throughout to present a miniature lesson in all that makes this composer unique.

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending*

David Gutman explores the diverse interpretative approaches to Vaughan Williams's hugely popular and 'quintessentially English' romance for violin and orchestra and chooses his favourite recording

There's no evidence to suggest that the composer himself considered *The Lark Ascending* in any way exceptional so why has it morphed into the classical hit almost everyone knows? Whereas once this unassuming romance was heard as a direct evocation of the 12 non-consecutive lines by George Meredith which preface the score, today's wider listenership is largely unaware of its poetic wellspring. The 'quintessentially English' tag applicable to the ornate Victorian verse seems increasingly inadequate to explain the music's global appeal.

In 2011, when New York's public radio network asked listeners what they'd like to hear on the 10th anniversary of 9/11, *The Lark Ascending* came second behind Barber's *Adagio*. In Australia, possibly helped by its deployment in Anzac-related ceremonies, it currently heads ABC Classic FM's poll of music that 'makes your world stand still'. Play the piece to a Frenchman and he may tell you that it sounds like Ravel. What the most celebrated record guide of the 1950s skewered as the aesthetic vulnerability of Vaughan Williams's legacy ('a steady trickle of pentatonic wish-wash') looks set to win *The Lark Ascending* an army of new friends in the Far East. Put crudely, they think it sounds Chinese.

IS THIS GREAT MUSIC?

The composer's estate pours the proceeds into musical good works. And yet, critically speaking, *The Lark Ascending* isn't taken

seriously. Cynics and those in thrall to the Germanic model of what constitutes great music insist that the piece owes its ubiquity to the fact that it's just the right length for a passive reverie between domestic chores, that nothing actually happens in it, that its sensibility is innately conservative and rural. Much of this is factually incorrect but can't be comprehensively refuted here.

Vaughan Williams was no escapist. That he belongs in the left-leaning internationalist company of Copland and Shostakovich is attested by the conscientiously acquired earth-rootedness of his mature idiom and its determination to articulate shared feelings, particularly in time of war. At the same time, his best music succeeds by seeming purer (more Sibelian?) than theirs. As *The Times* noted after *The Lark Ascending*'s first orchestral outing, in June 1921, it 'showed serene disregard of the fashions of today or yesterday. It dreams its way along.' Ursula Vaughan Williams maintained that her husband, a reluctant countryman, could never have identified an actual lark, and many stories (not least her own) about the work's genesis have been shown to be apocryphal. What we do know is that he began writing it before the First World War and completed it only after his life-changing experiences as a stretcher-bearer at the front. The ambiguities are all the greater because, like most creative Britons of his time and class, Vaughan Williams felt it necessary to appear more amateurish than he was. *The Lark Ascending* may be thought 'slight'



but it is motivically integrated, deftly orchestrated and loved by millions.

So is this straightforward nostalgia or did the composer hard-wire something else into the piece from the start? Take his notation of the surprisingly tricky opening: those open chords move in parallel across the bar-line, creating an impression of



A vision of Leith Hill in Surrey by Sutton Palmer from 1909. The Vaughan Williams family lived at Leith Hill Place from 1875-95.

PHOTOGRAPHY:
MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

‘otherness’ through their distinctive modal harmony. Recordings demonstrate how these have slowed over the years as the music’s quality of repose has seemed at once more precious and more unattainable in a commodified, switched-on world. It sounds preposterous to claim that the piece might be conceived in terms of a dialogue between

representation and commentary, but in creating that potent sense of loss Vaughan Williams must be doing something more than contrasting whimsical bird music with a folksier ground-level middle section. Performances aspiring to seamlessness, in which you might not guess that the cadenza-like passages are unbarred,

have begun losing ground to those which embrace the discontinuities. Meaning is always in flux, as with the *Adagietto* of Mahler’s Fifth Symphony, which within a decade went from a celebration of earthly love to a funeral favourite. Music has this mysterious ability to mean what we want it to mean, to acquire a life of its own. All of

which renders questions of authenticity more than usually problematic.

EARLY AND 'PERIOD' RECORDINGS

There are in fact two 'period' performances of *The Lark Ascending*, one dating from 1928, not long after the work was premiered by its dedicatee, Marie Hall, but featuring a different violinist. The other is a 1990s project embodying the neatly sanitising mindset of that time. The composer himself directed it at the Three Choirs Festival as late as 1956, before 'authentic' meant something else. Isolde Menges, sister of maestro Herbert Menges, is the soloist in that early 78rpm set (HMV; freely accessible via the AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music at charm.kcl.ac.uk), a fascinating document in which she plays with confidence, continuous well-controlled vibrato and a very straight bat. The accompanying instrumentalists under the young Malcolm Sargent seem less interested in precise attack, with even the strings' use of *portamento* reflecting inadequate preparation as much as stylistic intentionality. As there's none of the topping and tailing customary when 78s are tidied into more modern commercial formats, we are reminded that chords were routinely prolonged in the run-up to side breaks. The generally brisk speeds, extending to a businesslike closing cadenza, might just have been determined by the need to shoehorn the music into manageable chunks; Stanford's 'Leprechaun's Dance' (Op 79 No 3) occupied the fourth side. No such



Marie Hall, *The Lark's* dedicatee who helped RVW revise the work in 1920

considerations affected Barry Wordsworth and the New Queen's Hall Orchestra in 1992. More numerous gut strings back soloist Hagai Shaham (consistently sweet, if somewhat bland) while ceding pride of place to woodwind instruments, sonically attractive and *literally* woody. Yet the heart does not soar. The big orchestral return at figure 33 feels perfunctory and the sound is too dense.

Back – or forward – to the 1940s! The late Michael Kennedy always spoke highly of the Boyd Neel Orchestra's 78s with soloist Frederick Grinke (Decca, 6/40), but neither that recording nor Sargent's Columbia 1947

remake with David Wise (Dutton, 5/95) can be readily obtained today. The earliest version to survive is the 1952 Parlophone 10-inch LP made by Sir Adrian Boult and the LPO with the band's sometime leader

Jean Pougnet. This is of interest to Beatles mavens as one of George Martin's early classical projects, but its high reputation among Vaughan Williams fanciers is a little mystifying. The conception is taut and to the point, but the soloist has one of those rapid, intense vibratos that, for me at least, fails to transcend its period.

The Lark Ascending, rather suited to an era of shorter playing times, found itself thereafter confined to the margins on 12-inch LP – a bit player in some English music assortment or a makeweight for a symphony. Only much later did it start headlining soloist-led collections, ultimately enlisted as a marketing tool for CD anthologies in which it plays a relatively minor part. With today's online platforms, the wheel has turned full circle – but that is to get ahead of ourselves.

ACCUSATIONS OF PAROCHIALISM

Vaughan Williams may have believed passionately that classical music was the birthright of everyone, but he would have rejected the lazy parochialism censured in *Gramophone's* review of the first American recording of his piece, in which George Szell's assistant Louis Lane directed Rafael Druian and the Cleveland Sinfonietta (Columbia, 10/64; reissue, 3/81 – nla): 'I have a feeling that the very "authenticity" of many English performances, the "dew-on-the-grass" effect, lies more than anything

THE PURIST'S CHOICE

Iona Brown / Marriner

Argo   414 595-2ZH

Not the most ingratiating interpretation,



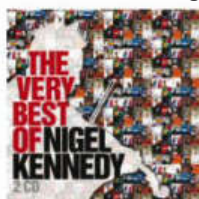
nor the best-preserved sonically, but nowhere else does the Lark soar more convincingly, finally unfettered by earthly concerns

THE MOULD BREAKER

Nigel Kennedy / Rattle

EMI     631514-2

The Lark Ascending on the grandest scale,



pregnant with new possibilities – technical, interpretative and otherwise. This is a special event rather than a safe library choice.

THE DARK HORSE

Hilary Hahn / C Davis

DG     474 8732GSA

A controversial rendition of Vaughan



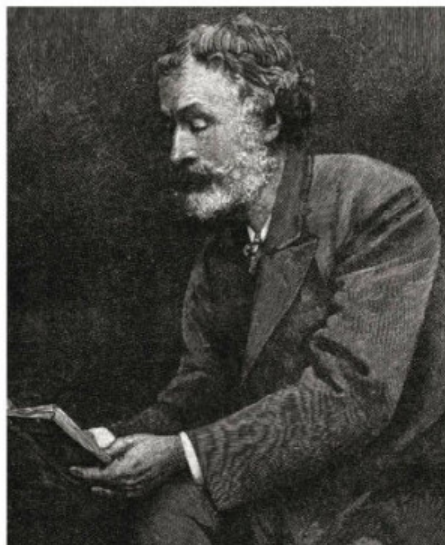
Williams's popular piece, setting an implacable protagonist with flawless intonation against a lovingly personalised orchestral backdrop.

in their very tentativeness musically, just as the celebrated Viennese “lilt” is often the result of slack discipline and no more. Give me polish and confidence like this.’ You may be surprised to learn that those are the words of the late Edward Greenfield in younger, less emollient days. And sure enough, there *has* been a tendency to overlook the technical shortcomings of indigenous practitioners while berating Johnny Foreigner for failings real or imagined.

No special pleading is required for **Hugh Bean**, an orchestra leader who, when not keeping Otto Klemperer’s show on the road, was a distinguished concerto soloist and teacher. It’s difficult to listen to his familiar rendition with fresh ears, and I found his direct lyrical warmth as appealing as ever. Boult conducts with absolute naturalness, too, so every gear change glides by without strain. If there is a downside it’s apparent from the very start. Boult, prioritising that sense of line over the composer’s dynamic gradations, makes little of the *ppp* marking attached to all but the muted horns. Bathed in golden-age analogue stereo from HMV’s Abbey Road the music-making doesn’t set out to ruffle feathers, but then why should it?

Sir Neville Marriner and **Iona Brown** offer something radical with their first recording. The music is given more space, partly a matter of broader tempos but also of microphone placement in the old Kingsway Hall in London. The ASMF’s jewel-like sonority is located in a resonant space, the soloist’s silvery presence seeming to come from above and behind. The cooler, more objective quality of the reading appears to reflect some lines from the poem that Vaughan Williams does not quote directly in the score: ‘The song seraphically free / Of taint of personality, / So pure that it salutes the suns’. Confusingly, this is not the version chosen for inclusion in Decca’s recent 28-disc tribute, ‘Neville Marriner: The Argo Years’, which gives us the same performers’ ASV remake. Brown, still excellent, is more closely observed, the horns too forward. Perhaps the presence of underground-train rumble and some digitally acquired glare up top persuaded the compilers to pass over the genuine article.

Pinchas Zukerman, who recently re-recorded *The Lark Ascending* with the RPO, was long the biggest celebrity associated with it. He joined the sessions as a favour to his friend Daniel Barenboim, and his contribution has the strengths and weaknesses to be expected of a recording made virtually without preparation. That gorgeous tone survives close microphone scrutiny, but generalised romantic warmth



George Meredith, whose poem inspired RVW

replaces any real sense of other-worldliness, and the sometimes brusque accompaniment from the ECO does not live up to a sensitive opening. Greenfield was positive, though: ‘This is the lark singing in the heat of day.’

A BUNCH WITH FLAWS

It would be some years before a player of comparable individuality engaged with the piece in the recording studio. Vernon Handley’s LPO account, steeped in the Boult tradition, finds **David Nolan** a tad oversweet. Having coped with the austerity of Paavo Berglund (HMV, 2/81 – nla),

RPO leader **Barry Griffiths** is not inspired to his best form by the soft-focus passivity of André Previn. **Michael Davis** fares better with his old orchestra, assuming that the insistent vibrato isn’t distracting. Bernard Haitink and the LPO bring in teenage sensation **Sarah Chang** for a relatively fast-paced rendering in which Chang is wonderfully secure but fundamentally miscast: the timbre too beefy, the vibrato too wide. Better this, however, than the insecurity of **Michael Bochmann**, coping with an ensemble on the cusp of disintegration. Two recent recordings intended to sit within thematic programmes go better. **Lyn Fletcher**, leading Sir Mark Elder’s Hallé, is notably cool and collected on an ‘English Landscapes’ album exceptionally well recorded by Andrew Keener and Simon Eadon. **James Clark** does the honours for ‘Made in Britain’, a John Wilson project with the RLPO that perversely elects to torpedo the idyll with Edward German’s *Nell Gwyn* overture.

Readers may be expecting me to top-rate **Tasmin Little**, whose first recording was made in the presence of the composer’s widow and whose remake boasts perhaps the most beautiful sound. Sir Andrew Davis is not prone to expressive exaggeration, and if he has slowed down just a little over the years so too did Boult. Little is among the most delicately responsive of all, carefully inflecting the line to convey both sadness and rapture. However, her intonation is not always absolutely spot on.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1952 Pougnet: LPO / Boult	Dutton © CDBP9703 (10/53 ^r , 12/00); EMI © 13 903567-2; LPO © 4 LPO0097
1967 Bean: New Philh Orch / Boult	EMI © 2 207992-2; © 764022-2 (10/67 ^r , 1/01 ^r)
1972 Brown: ASMF / Marriner	Argo © 414 595-2ZH; Decca ① 2 452 707-2DF2; © 2 460 357-2DF2; © 478 5692DB; Eloquence © 2 ELQ442 8341 (10/72 ^r)
1973 Zukerman: ECO / Barenboim	DG ④ 439 529-2GGA; Eloquence ④ ELQ442 8333 (4/75 ^r)
1982 Brown: ASMF / Marriner	ASV ⑤ PLT8520; ④ CDDCA518; Decca © (28 discs) 478 6883DH28 (5/83 ^r)
1985 Nolan: LPO / Handley	CIP © 574880-2 (12/85 ^r , 10/87 ^r , A/O1); EMI © 678271-2; © 5 098202-2
1986 Griffiths: RPO / Previn	Telarc © 2 2CD80738; © CD80138 (7/87 ^r)
1987 Davis: LSO / Thomson	Chandos ⑤ CHAN9775 (1/88 ^r)
1989 Bochmann: English SO / Boughton	Nimbus ⑤ NI5208 (2/90); ⑤ NI7013; ⑤ NI7009; © 4 NI1754; © 4 NI5210
1990 Little: BBC SO / A Davis	Apex © 0927 49584-2 (8/91 ^r); Teldec © 2564 69848-3 (5/03)
1992 H Shaham: New Queen’s Hall Orch / Wordsworth	Argo ④ 440 116-2ZH (5/94)
1994 Chang: LPO / Haitink	EMI © 2 627910-2; © 585151-2 (12/95 ^r); Warner © 7 984759-2
1997 Kennedy: CBSO / Rattle	EMI © 2 631514-2; © 2 557411-2; ① 1 697588-2 (1/98 ^r)
2002 Tognetti: Australian CO / Peelman	ABC ⑤ 476 102-6
2003 Hahn: LSO / C Davis	DG ⑤ 474 8732GSA; ⑤ 474 5042GH (11/04)
2003 Jansen: RPO / Wordsworth	Decca ⑤ 475 0112DH (11/03)
2005 Fletcher: Hallé Orch / Elder	Hallé ⑤ CDHLL7512 (12/06); © 4 CDHLD7532
2007 Benedetti: LPO / Litton	Decca ⑤ 478 6106DH ^{ML} ; ⑤ 478 5338DH ^{ML} (A/09 ^r)
2009 Dauth: Sydney SO / M Wigglesworth	Melba ⑤ MR301131 (6/12)
2010 J Fischer: Monte Carlo PO / Kreizberg	Decca ⑤ 478 2684DH (8/11)
2011 Clark: RLPO / Wilson	Avie ⑤ AV2194 (12/11)
2013 Little: BBC PO / A Davis	Chandos ⑤ CHANI0796 (1/14)
2014 Gould: Riga Sinfonietta	Edition ⑤ EDNI058 (7/15)
2014 Waley-Cohen: Orch of the Swan / Curtis	Signum ⑤ SIGCD399 (1/15)



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	Song of the Stars	Wells Cathedral, Finch	£ 5.00

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LEFT-FIELD TENDENCIES

Nigel Kennedy's recording, for all its unapologetic self-indulgence, stopped me in my tracks. This is supremely accomplished playing in a way that Little's, alas, is not. Sir Simon Rattle's old Birmingham band is captured with what was then unprecedented depth and fidelity in its new hall. Forget Kennedy's self-penned booklet-notes, which are a typical mix of insight and silliness. There's plenty to marvel at even if the interpretation is a bit bonkers too, replete with expressive overstatement from all parties and grinding to a halt more than once over an unprecedented 17'30".

While *The Lark Ascending* is not an obvious candidate for live recording, **Richard Tognetti** (with Roland Peelman) leads the Australian Chamber Orchestra a merry dance, marking a yet more complete rupture with the polite way of doing things. Tognetti's line, peppered with constant inflections of pitch and timbre, is presumably meant to sound as if he's making it up as he goes along. Not always perfectly in tune, he probably doesn't care, his vibrato coming and going with complete freedom and in the most unexpected places. If you find this difficult to listen to there's a rival concert version from down under featuring **Michael Dauth** under the direction of Mark Wigglesworth, never one to gild the lily. While they pace the outer sections slowly and avoid celebrity glitz, there's little in the way of mystical transcendence. Or was it just that I was distracted by extraneous audience noise?

Most controversial, in the UK at least, has been the studio recording by **Hilary Hahn** with Sir Colin Davis and the LSO, which, like Kennedy's, pairs the work with Elgar's concerto. The disc received a mere two stars from *The Guardian* and excited scant enthusiasm here. A puzzle. Hahn's detached and analytical style is scarcely an unknown quantity and might have been made for this music. Yes, her vibrato is slower and wider than might be anticipated, the timbre not without a certain sinewy quality. Still, every note is a miracle of fine tuning, clean articulation and impeccable control. This is a *Lark* with backbone. Under Davis – who cannot, of course, be prevented from singing along – the LSO turns in what seems to me



Vaughan Williams with his first wife Adeline in 1917

the most remarkable realisation on any of these discs. The opening gestures are too slow to fulfil their structural function but the playing could scarcely be more rapt. The bigger hesitations towards the end at least take their cue from the commas marked in the score. The high-end recording, which might not agree with some sound systems, works a treat on mine. The score turns out to have been in Hahn's life from early childhood, having been one of her mother's favourites.

STAR VEHICLE

In the last 10 years *The Lark Ascending* has become an accepted star vehicle.

Janine Jansen, a virtuoso who champions the piece in concert, seems less involved on her debut album for Decca. **Nicola Benedetti**, whose playing is never less than finely calculated, has a more forceful collaborator in Andrew Litton; they give themselves more space without necessarily plumbing any deeper. Both are preferable to **Julia Fischer**, whose 'Poème' miscellany was respectfully received in the wake of the death of its conductor, Yakov Kreizberg. Sadly, their interpretation proves drab, and that final infinite upward spiral needed

more practice. Two recent home-grown contenders have more to say about the music. **Tamsin Waley-Cohen** doesn't have Hahn's impregnability yet manages a lingering, questioning reading, rendered uncompetitive only by her inelegant accompanists. Better in this respect is the self-conducted **Thomas Gould** version captured live in Riga. While Gould can take to the air with the best of them, he brings out the distinct qualities of human and avian aspiration in a way Boult might have found unidiomatic. The other work is Beethoven's concerto, a pairing never contemplated in the 20th century.

What, then, are we looking for today as the storm clouds move ever closer? What price gentleness, civility, grace and that particular 'English' quality of repose without a truly watertight technique? My No 1 is an unfussy old-school rendition but I am conscious that younger listeners may prefer the more active and malleable interpretations of recent years. A different shortlist might be assembled, still

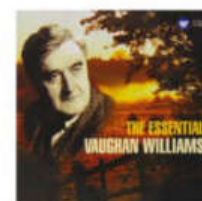
haunting but perhaps less score-bound, with the likes of Gould leading the way. I am struck too by how much depends on one's personal response to the timbre and intonation of individual players and their presence in the mix. Too flamboyant or forward a placement and the composer's romance becomes a concerto – albatross rather than lark. That cannot be right whether the soloist is an established star or a team player par excellence. This survey has barely scratched the surface of the recent explosion of recordings (you can even hear the violin and piano version courtesy of Matthew Trusler and Iain Burnside – Albion, A/14), but there should be enough diversity to satisfy the most insatiable fan. **G**

THE TOP CHOICE

Hugh Bean / Boult

EMI @ 2 207992-2

Warm-toned and sensitively recorded,



this reassuring mainstream option, under the work's original conductor, still sounds well enough to warrant the prime recommendation.

PLAYLISTS

Explore music via our themed listening suggestions – and why not create your own too?

RSNO Principal Flute Katherine Bryan on the pieces that display her instrument at its versatile best, *Gramophone* critic Jed Distler on music evoking nature's own musicians, the birds, and Oxford Philomusica's Music Director on works directed from the piano keyboard.

The magic of the flute

Katherine Bryan selects 10 works that demonstrate the flute's versatility

The flute: an underrated instrument? The capabilities of the modern flute are such that, in my opinion, it can rival the big hitters of the solo concert platform. This playlist shines a light on the flute, my instrument, and some of the amazing pieces and players that advocate it. Some of the composers are well known: Prokofiev's Sonata – played here by the Swedish flautist Göran Marcusson – is a stalwart of the repertoire and gives the flute a chance to be meaty, sweet and whimsical, all within a few pages; the *Largo* by JS Bach (giving us the opportunity to hear the incredible sound of Marcel Moyse) is simple beauty. Gieseking and Rouse are less well known but offer two incredible works which, in my experience, audiences connect to and fall in love with (played here by two of my former Juilliard teachers). Orchestral composers also write brilliantly for the flute and push it to its limits: Boulez's wonderful interpretation of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* and a quick and fiery *Classical* Symphony by Prokofiev. The flute can take on many characters – Nielsen's Concerto, one of my favourite works, is quirky; Barber's *Canzone* (taken from the piano concerto) is soulful and haunting. And to jazz? Claude Bolling cleverly gives us a classical flute juxtaposed against a jazz trio setting; and Herbie Mann...well, if I need to smile, this track inevitably does the trick!

- **Prokofiev**

Flute Sonata – 4th movt: Allegro con brio
Göran Marcusson *fl* Joachim Kallhed *pf*
Intim Musik

- **JS Bach** Sonata for Flute and Violin –

1st movt: Largo

Marcel Moyse *fl*

Classic Collection, IT WHY



Katherine Bryan: the flute can 'rival the big hitters of the concert platform'

- **Gieseking**

Sonatine – 1st movt: Moderato

Jeanne Baxtresser *fl* Pedja Muzijevic *pf*
Cala

- **Rouse**

Flute Concerto – 5th movt: 'Anhran'

Carol Wincenc *fl* Houston Symphony
Orchestra / Christoph Eschenbach
Telarc

- **Ravel**

Daphnis et Chloé

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra /
Pierre Boulez
DG

- **Prokofiev** Symphony No 1, 'Classical' –

Finale: Molto vivace

Chamber Orchestra of Europe /
Claudio Abbado
DG

- **Nielsen** Flute Concerto

Petri Alanko *fl* Finnish Radio Symphony
Orchestra / Jukka-Pekka Saraste
Ondine

- **Barber**

Canzone (from Piano Concerto, Op 38)

Jeanne Baxtresser *fl* Israel Margalit *pf*
Warner Classics

- **Bolling**

Suite for flute and jazz trio – Sentimentale

Jean-Pierre Rampal *fl* Claude Bolling *pf*
Freemux & Associés

- **Mann**

Give a Little Whistle

Herbie Mann *fl* Buddy Collette *fl/picc*
VSOP/Sinetone AMR

Feathered music

Jed Distler chooses music that depicts our fine feathered friends

Composers seem fascinated by birds and have never hesitated to incorporate all varieties of clucks, chirps, coos, caws, tweets and cock-a-doodle-dos into their scores. This trend may have started with Biber's *Sonata representativa* back in the 17th century. Closer to our time, Messiaen went beyond mere imitation. He notated hundreds of authentic birdsongs and incorporated them throughout almost all of his mature piano music and beyond. Rautavaara's *Cantus arcticus*, however, went so far as to juxtapose actual pre-recorded birds singing their hearts out with a live orchestra.

Our feathered friends seem happier and more upbeat within Respighi's orchestral suite *Gli uccelli* ('The Birds') than their wistful lamenting throughout Ravel's 'Oiseaux tristes'. Granados's nightingale seduces, while a raven companion bodes less well for the outcome of Schubert's *Winter Journey*. Messenger's effervescent ballet score *Les deux pigeons* truly takes flight while, by contrast, Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein's opera *Four Saints* leaves us with 'pigeons on the grass, alas'.

Finally, you may ask: our musical aviary so far has presented flying, singing and

standing birds, but where do we find dancing birds? Elementary, my dear ornithologist: visit *Swan Lake*!

- **Biber**
Sonata representativa
Andrew Manze *vn*
Harmonia Mundi
- **Messiaen**
Catalogue d'oiseaux
Jocelyne d'Oliveira *pf*
Naxos
- **Rautavaara**
Cantus arcticus
Laura Mikkola *pf*
Royal Scottish National Orchestra /
Hannu Lintu
Naxos
- **Respighi**
Gli uccelli ('The Birds')
London Symphony Orchestra /
István Kertész
Decca
- **Ravel** Miroirs - Oiseaux tristes
Anne Queffelec *pf*
Warner Classics
- **Granados**
Goyescas - La maja y el ruiseñor
(The Maiden and the Nightingale)
Van Cliburn *pf*
RCA
- **Schubert**
Winterreise - Die Krähe
Jonas Kaufmann *bar* Helmut Deutsch *pf*
Sony Classical
- **Messager**
Les deux pigeons
Orchestra of Welsh National Opera /
Richard Bonynghe
Decca

- **Thomson**
Four Saints in Three Acts - Act 3:
'Pigeons on the grass, alas'
Orchestra of Our Time /
Joel Thome
Nonesuch
- **Tchaikovsky**
Swan Lake - Danse des petits cygnes
Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra /
Mstislav Rostropovich
DG

From where I sit...

Marios Papadopoulos gathers works than can be directed from the keyboard

I have been directing from the keyboard for over 40 years now, communicating directly with the orchestra without going via another medium – although my approach has changed with experience. Rather than switching from one role to another, I integrate both, allowing musicians to follow with reduced hand gestures, more eye contact and bodily movement.

Earlier exponents of the art in modern times included the Swiss pianist Edwin Fischer and the great Géza Anda, whose revered DG discs of the complete Mozart concertos showcase him directing the Camerata Academica of the Salzburg Mozarteum from the keyboard with sublime beauty, elegance and simplicity. I remember talking to Vladimir Ashkenazy soon after his first experience directing from the keyboard: he was amazed at how little the orchestra required from him to get the ensemble perfectly together in Mozart's K467.

In 1984 I directed Stravinsky's Concerto for piano and wind from the keyboard in a Hyperion recording with the RPO. The rhythmic impulses emanating from the keyboard were powerful enough to propel the musicians to follow – and indeed they enjoyed being kept on their toes!

Speaking on Classic FM recently, Daniel Barenboim put his finger on the point, dismissing the 'player-conductor' concept when undertaken by non-professional conductors: 'They call it "play and conduct". They don't. They play without a conductor.'

- **Mozart**
Piano Concerto No 24, K491
English Chamber Orchestra /
Murray Perahia *pf*
Sony Classical



Marios Papadopoulos and the Oxford Philomusica

- **JS Bach**
Concerto No 1 for Harpsichord, Strings and Continuo, BWV1052
Chamber Orchestra of Europe /
András Schiff *pf*
Universal Classics & Jazz
- **JS Bach**
Concerto for Three Keyboards, BWV1064
Philharmonia Orchestra / Edwin Fischer *pf*
Warner Classics
- **Mozart** Piano Concerto No 22, K482
English Chamber Orchestra /
Daniel Barenboim *pf*
EMI/Warner Classics
- **Chopin**
Piano Concerto No 1, Op 11
Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra /
Tamás Vásáry *pf*
DG
- **Mozart** Piano Concerto No 17, K453
Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra /
André Previn *pf*
Philips
- **Mozart**
Piano Concerto No 18, K456 - Cadenza
Camerata Academia of the Salzburg
Mozarteum / Géza Anda *pf*
DG
- **Mozart** Piano Concerto No 21, K467
Philharmonia Orchestra /
Vladimir Ashkenazy *pf*
Decca
- **Beethoven** Piano Concerto No 4, Op 58
Staatskapelle Berlin / Daniel Barenboim *pf*
Decca
- **Gershwin** Rhapsody in Blue
Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra /
Leonard Bernstein *pf*
DG



Schubert's raven loomed on our January 2015 cover

The playlists for this feature were compiled in conjunction with Qobuz, the music streaming service. You can listen to the playlists at gramophone.co.uk/playlists



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PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

As the new season gets under way, there's plenty of live music to enjoy in the concert hall, online and at cinemas, from the New York Philharmonic's opening gala to Figaro at the ROH

David Geffen Hall, Lincoln Center, New York & PBS & online

Alan Gilbert conducts the New York Philharmonic, September 24

The New York Philharmonic's opening gala concert is a double celebration: as well as marking the start of the season (one which includes Esa-Pekka Salonen beginning his three-year Composer-in-Residence post), it also celebrates the inauguration of the orchestra's home, David Geffen Hall – formerly Avery Fisher Hall – at Lincoln Center. Alan Gilbert will lead the orchestra in Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and Grieg's Piano Concerto (with Lang Lang as soloist). The concert will be telecast nationally in the US in *Live From Lincoln Center* on PBS stations. The audio will then be available on the orchestra's own website the following week.

nyphil.org; pbs.org

St David's Hall, Cardiff & BBC Radio 3

Thomas Søndergård conducts the BBC NOW, October 3

The BBC National Orchestra of Wales's new season begins with Principal Conductor Thomas Søndergård conducting a sparkling programme featuring *London Concerto* by new Composer-in-Association Huw Watkins, Stravinsky's *Fireworks*, Borodin's *Polovtsian Dances* and Elgar's *Cockaigne Overture*. It culminates in Rachmaninov's *The Bells*, with vocal soloists Anastasia Kalagina, Mikhail Petrenko and Misha Didyk. Those not able to get to Cardiff can listen live on BBC Radio 3.

bbc.co.uk/bbcnow; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Metropolitan Opera, New York & UK cinemas

Anna Netrebko stars in *Il trovatore*, October 3

Il trovatore, running from September 25 to February 13, is the production that kicks off the Met's Live in HD season this year. David McVicar's Goya-inspired production is conducted by Marco Armiliato with a cast topped by Anna Netrebko in her highly anticipated Met role debut as Leonora, the opera's tortured heroine who sacrifices her life for her love of the gypsy troubadour. Dmitri Hvorostovsky sings Count di Luna in the first pairing of these two Russian superstars at the Met since 2002.

metopera.org/season/in-cinemas

Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester

Michael Kennedy Memorial Concert, October 5

Author and critic Michael Kennedy who died last year aged 88, was a key figure in

EVENT OF THE MONTH

Rattle conducts all nine Beethoven symphonies



Berlin Philharmonie & online

Rattle conducts Beethoven, October 3 & 15

A complete cycle of Beethoven's symphonies conducted by Sir Simon Rattle dominates the Berlin Philharmonic's 2015/16 season, and October sees all nine performed in the Philharmonie and online via the Digital Concert Hall. Many will gravitate towards the Ninth on October 10 & 16 when the orchestra is joined by the Rundfunkchor Berlin and soloists Annette Dasch, Eva Vogel, Christian Elsner and Dmitry Ivashchenko. Our top choice, though, is the first concert, on October 3 – a national holiday in Germany celebrating the fall of the Berlin Wall – which pairs the Fourth with the Seventh. The concert is repeated on October 15, broadcast live in the DCH. Rattle then tours the cycle to Paris, Vienna and NYC.

berliner-philharmoniker.de/en; digitalconcerthall.com

All Saints' Church, Dulverton & BBC Radio 3

Two Moors Festival recital, October 19

The Two Moors Festival has another tempting roster of events this year. One highlight, to be broadcast on BBC Radio 3, will be a Lieder recital from pianist Imogen Cooper and baritone Wolfgang Holzmair. This is a musical partnership that has now spanned many years, described in this magazine as having an 'instinctive unity', and their programme for Dulverton is particularly carefully and beguilingly put together. The Schumanns bookend it, the recital beginning with Clara Schumann Lieder including 'Das ist ein Tag, der klingen mag' (Rollett) and 'Sie liebten sich beide' (Heine), and concluding with Robert Schumann's Kerner songs, Op 35. Between them is a complete stylistic contrast in the form of Frank Martin's *Sechs Monologe aus Jedermann* of 1943.

thetwomoorsfestival.co.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Stockholm Concert Hall, Stockholm & online

Royal Stockholm PO, various dates

Those who haven't experienced the impressive 1920s architecture of Stockholm Concert Hall will be interested to know that the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic has recently started an online concert platform called RSPOplay, where pre-filmed concerts are available free to stream. Details of particular concerts to be streamed weren't available as we went to press, but do check on the website for updates.

rspoplay.se; facebook.com/rspoplay

Manchester, so it's fitting that his official Memorial Concert will be held in the RNCM Concert Hall. Compèred by Petroc Trelawny and conducted by Sir Mark Elder, Sir Andrew Davis and Harish Shankar, the gala-style programme will include Vaughan Williams's *Serenade to Music*, and Elgar's *Romance* for bassoon and orchestra with Laurence Perkins as soloist. The concert's many vocal soloists will include sopranos Susan Bullock and Joan Rodgers, mezzos Alice Coote and Kathryn Rudge, baritones Alan Opie and Roderick Williams and bass Sir John Tomlinson. Proceeds from the concert will go to a new Michael Kennedy Memorial Fund which will support RNCM students through bursaries and scholarships.

rncm.ac.uk

Royal Opera House & cinemas worldwide

Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, October 5

David McVicar is clocking up a healthy tally of cinema screenings this month – his much-loved *Figaro* production kick-starts the Royal Opera House's Live in HD opera screenings this season. Ivor Bolton conducts the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House with a cast headed by Erwin Schrott as Figaro, and Anita Hartig as Susanna. Also worth watching out for is this production's *Barbarina*, played by British soprano Robyn Allegra Parton, who made her ROH debut earlier this year in *The Virtues of Things* at the Linbury.

roh.org.uk; roh.org.uk/cinemas

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This month I enjoy a stripped-down UK-tuned amplifier and some superb headphones, and I also get a computer audio masterclass.

Andrew Everard,
Audio Editor

AWARDS ISSUE TEST DISCS



With a fine-detailed yet warm sound, this set of quartets by Benjamin Godard, from the Elysée Quartet on Timpani, is hugely involving.



The Bach Collegium Japan's recordings for BIS can be relied on for superb sound quality, and this glorious latest set is no disappointment.

Core hi-fi is alive and well in 2015

The latest arrivals show strengths in traditional areas like vinyl, CD and speakers



After a few months when it seems the new product arrivals were dominated by system add-ons and those aimed at portable listening, core audio is back centre-stage as we head toward the traditional peak hi-fi-buying season. For example, Quad has unveiled a complete new loudspeaker series ❶, from bookshelf models to hefty floorstanders, and all using a newly designed ribbon tweeter.

The Quad S Series ribbon tweeter harks back to the company's Corner Ribbon speaker, launched 66 years ago, but is a much more robust design thanks to a sandwich construction, suspended in a powerful magnetic field. The company says the frequency response extends beyond the limits of human hearing, while the dispersion has been tailored to give a wide horizontal arc while avoiding reflections from the floor and ceiling.

It's complemented by Quad's Kevlar-coned midrange and bass units, the latter tuned with ports in the standmount models and auxiliary bass radiators in the floorstanders. The speakers are finished in a choice of black or sapele maple, with the four-strong stereo range starting at £600 a pair for the smaller of two standmount models, the S-1, and rising to £1600/pr for the larger floorstanders, the S-5. There's

also a centre-channel speaker, the £500 S-C, and the speakers will also be available in premium finishes – hand-lacquered white and piano black – later in the year.

Celebrating 30 years since Marantz launched its original 'special edition' products ❷, the new SA-14 1SE SACD/CD player and PM-14 1SE amplifier are due on sale about now, at £1799 apiece. Heavily tuned by the company's Brand Ambassador, Ken Ishiwata (see this month's Audio Essay on page 142), both products offer elevated performance compared to the 'standard' versions thanks to extra damping and improved components, and the player also doubles as a digital-to-analogue converter, complete with an asynchronous USB input for use with a computer.

On the subject of digital inputs, the latest arrival from turntable specialist Pro-ject is designed to bridge the gap between vinyl records and digital audio: the Essential II Digital turntable ❸ has a new phono preamplifier built-in, able to output either line-level analogue audio or 24-bit/96kHz via an optical connection. That makes it suitable for connection to AV receivers, soundbars and the like, and the turntable comes complete with fitted Ortofon OM5E cartridge and dust-cover, and is designed for simple set-up and operation. It sells for £309 via distributor Henley Designs.

Back to speakers, and the new Prime Series range from US manufacturer SVS ❹ is now available here via distributor Karma-AV. The line-up runs from the self-explanatory Prime Bookshelf, at £399 a pair in black ash or £479 in piano gloss, to the 3.5-way, four-driver Prime Tower at £819/£969/pr.

Also available are dedicated centre and surround speakers, while there are 2.1- and 5.1-channel satellite/subwoofer packages: the 2.1 is £589 or £679, depending on finish, and the 5.1 £849/£999.

Finally this month, Onkyo is making the latest surround-sound technology, Dolby Atmos ❺, simple and affordable with the arrival of its £349 TX-SR444 AV receiver and a complete speaker package, available with or without an AV receiver.

As well as supporting Dolby Atmos, the 7.1-channel TX-SR444 can also handle 4K video, has four HDMI inputs and delivers 100W per channel. Onkyo has completely redesigned this model to make installation, set-up and operation simple.

The SKS-HT588 speaker package is a 5.1.2 set-up with additional upward-firing drive units to deliver the Atmos 'height' channels. It sells for £450, or £700 complete with the company's HT-R494 receiver, as the HT-S5805. ❻

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Onkyo A-9010(UK)

British-tuned entry-level amplifier is a throwback to the past – and a bargain

Once upon a time, everyone was at it: take an established amplifier, get the engineers back at base to work with staff at the UK subsidiary to refine it, delete some superfluous features in the quest for better performance, and sell it as a ‘UK tuned’ or ‘UK special edition’ or whatever.

It worked for companies including Denon, Kenwood, Pioneer and Sony, while other manufacturers including Marantz, Rotel and Technics also had British or European input into the voicing of their amps even though they didn’t play up the connection.

What’s more, companies began to notice that there was an unexpected side-effect: not only did the tuned products receive the kind of reviews from the British press to have them flying off the shelves, but the benefit of such reviews were also reflected in sales in the wider market, as countries across Europe and beyond started clamouring for these ‘UK tuned’ products.

‘It lives up to its promises, delivering solo piano with excellent weight and scale, and yet all the delicacy required’

In the days before the internet, where awareness of such things was less than it is now, I was amazed to find a display of the Pioneer A-400 at the Tokyo Audio Fair (of blessed memory), bedecked with British flags and pictures of the likes of The Beatles, London taxis and the Mini Cooper – the original one, not the monster it has become in the hands of BMW.



ONKYO A-9010(UK)

Type Stereo integrated amplifier

Price £199

Inputs Moving magnet phono, five line-in (four on RCA phono sockets, plus front panel 3.5mm stereo)

Outputs One pair of speakers, line audio, headphones (on 6.3mm socket)

Other connections Onkyo remote control output

Power output 44W per channel

Tone controls Yes, and loudness button, all bypassable using ‘direct’ button

Accessories supplied Remote control handset

Dimensions (WxHxD)

53.5x13x33.3cm

eu.onkyo.com



Even more startling was my discovery of displays of these ‘UK edition’ products in Bangkok’s hi-fi stores, again given the Land of Hope and Glory treatment, and a visit to the Welsh factory where Marantz amplifiers were stripped down and rebuilt to the KI-Signature specification: Japanese-made amplifier, tuned by a Japanese engineer living in Belgium and based in the Netherlands, and fettled in an anonymous factory in Wales.

In more recent times, we’ve seen less of this UK-tuned trend – well, let’s face it, we’ve seen fewer budget amplifiers in recent years, let alone models ‘hot-rodded’ in this manner. Onkyo, however, seems to think the time is right for a revival, as it’s

recently launched the £199 A-9010(UK) – and it’s a real cracker.

Coming up for its 70th anniversary next year, the Osaka-based company (although it’s now part of guitar maker Gibson’s stable of brands) is perhaps best-known these days for its range of AV receivers. Combining on-trend features with solid engineering, the Onkyo line-up consistently manages best-selling status in the AV market.

However, as I discovered on a visit to the company a few years back, it’s firmly committed to music, too. Yes, we had demonstrations of the latest receivers on that occasion, but only playing music, and we were also introduced to the e-Onkyo music download service. Then only

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SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The excellent A-9010(UK) can be paired with some fine budget separates to create a superb system.

ONKYO CN7050

Keeping it in the family, an excellent source component is Onkyo CN7050, combining the functions of CD player and network/internet music player.



QACOUSTICS 2010i SPEAKERS

Easy to drive, and with a lucid, powerful sound, the compact QAcoustics 2010i speakers are a well-established budget speaker choice.



destined for Japan, where it has rapidly established itself as a market leader, e-Onkyo rolled out to Europe last year, and has a strong catalogue of high-resolution material.

The A-9010(UK) is the latest evidence of that commitment: a 44W per channel amplifier complete with a moving magnet phono stage, five line-ins – four to the rear and a 3.5mm stereo input on the front panel), and even balance, treble and bass controls. It looks reassuringly simple (and maybe even a little old-fashioned, given that the version sold elsewhere also has built-in digital-to-analogue conversion, stripped out here in the quest for ultimate performance), and feels solid due to a high standard of build extending to metal, rather than plastic, control knobs, but sets itself apart with what's under the lid.

The basic building blocks of the A-9010 including Onkyo's Wide Range Amplifier Technology, which majors on high current flow for speaker control, capacitors with heatsinks for cool operation, and low-impedance output transistors, connected directly to the speaker terminals, rather than wired. There's also a dedicated headphone amplifier – rather than simply connecting the headphones to the main amp – designed to drive even high-impedance headphones via its 'full-size' 6.3mm socket.

To that are added selected components and circuit tuning carried out here in the UK, the intention being to add warmth and body to instruments: it's refreshing to find an amplifier showing an awareness of classical music when describing its attributes as 'accurate and dynamic audio reproduction – from delicate piano passages to an orchestra in full flight – even when the speaker impedance drops and increases the load.'

PERFORMANCE

Although I'm no stranger to what Onkyo can do when it puts its mind to playing music – I use one of its TX-NR818 receivers in my main system, although admittedly mainly to facilitate surround sound, with the stereo amplification provided by a dedicated stereo amp – one thing kept going through my mind when I slotted the A-9010(UK) in and started listening: this really doesn't sound like a £200 amplifier.

There's a very mature and confident sound here, far removed from the common (and misguided) audiophile idea that modern inexpensive amplifiers sound bright, lightweight and – well, cheap. True, there are some very competitive amplifiers in the sub-£500 arena these days, despite what anyone may tell you about the budget hi-fi market being in terminal decline, but I can't remember the last time I was so captivated by an amp this inexpensive.

Whether fed from price-comparable – well, almost – source components or my reference network player (which was around 60 times the price of the Onkyo last time I looked), and whether feeding inexpensive speakers or large floorstanders one might sensibly think were well out of its league, the A-9010(UK) displays control, power and richness way beyond its

'Stereo imaging is highly impressive at this price level (and beyond), and the clear, natural balance is really rather amazing'

price, and would give many a much more expensive amplifier a run for its money.

What's more, it lives up to its promises, delivering solo piano with excellent weight and scale, and yet all the delicacy required: there's never that sense that you're hearing a cartoonish over-scaled instrument, but rather one in which you can hear the wood and metal in action in the strike of hammer on string, the decay of the notes in a realistic acoustic, and the sheer percussive attack of which the instrument is capable. Stereo imaging is highly impressive at this price level (and beyond), and the clear, natural balance is really rather amazing.

It repeats this trick with other solo instruments and voices, and small-scale ensembles, thanks to its fast but generous sound, but even more remarkable is the way this little amplifier – it's only 44W per channel, remember – cruises through larger orchestral works, seemingly untroubled by the demands being placed on it by complex music being played at relatively high levels. Even better it retains these qualities

Or you could try...

I usually try to suggest alternatives at lower and higher prices in this panel, but with the Onkyo that's a bit tricky, simply because it offers so much for a bargain price.



Cambridge Audio Topaz AM5

However, if your budget really is tight, it is possible to buy a reasonable amplifier for even less than £200, such as the entry-level model in the Cambridge Audio range, the Topaz AM5. Currently selling for around £120, it offers less power than the Onkyo, at 25W per channel, and doesn't have a phono stage, but there is a 3.5mm stereo input on the front panel, and subtle tone controls.

cambridgeaudio.com



Marantz PM6005

You have to spend rather more than £200 to improve on the Onkyo's performance, but the £299 Marantz PM6005 plays music with slightly better weight and detail, despite offering a similar 45Wpc output. Like the Onkyo, it has a moving magnet phono stage, but the main extra here is built-in digital-to-analogue conversion, with both optical and coaxial inputs.

marantz.co.uk

when playing music from LP or through headphones, furthering the impression that this is an extremely well-sorted amplifier at a bargain price.

I find it reassuring that in this age of iEverything and music streaming, I am still asked quite often what equipment I'd suggest to those just starting out in building a first 'proper' stereo system. In those circumstances, the Onkyo A-9010(UK) would be recommended without hesitation or reservation. **G**

● **REVIEW OPPO PM-3**

A perfect travelling companion

Closed-back version repeats success of flagship originals

Oppo threw the hi-fi industry something of a curveball when it launched its PM-1 headphones back in April last year: not only did it announce the premium-priced model, but also revealed a more affordable version was already on its way, along with a high-quality dedicated headphone amplifier.

It was definitely something of an impressive debut: both the £1099 PM-1 and £700 PM-2 were built around the same planar magnetic driver technology, the main differences being in the materials selected for the headband and ear-cushions, plus the range of accessories supplied as standard.

Meanwhile the HA-1 headphone amplifier, with its built-in digital-to-analogue conversion, drew heavily on the audio design of the company's justifiably acclaimed Blu-ray players, which are designed as much for high-quality audio playback as the delivery of video content from BD and DVD discs.

The planar magnetic technology, while used by other manufacturers in the past, has been the subject of extensive and exhaustive research by Oppo: the PM-1 and PM-2 use 85x69mm seven-layer ultra-lightweight oval diaphragms with elements arranged in a spiral across both sides of its entire area. These are suspended in a push-pull neodymium magnetic field, rather than using the coil and magnet 'miniature loudspeaker' drivers found in most headphones. Those drivers, plus the open-backed design of the earpieces, give the Oppos their characteristically airy sound.

Yes, that means the Oppo headphones need a healthy dose of amplifier power to be heard at their best, such as that delivered by the HA-1 DAC/amp, but the results are well worthwhile in terms of dynamics, detail and sheer presence.

That makes the combination a superb system for personal listening at home; however, the size of the PM-1 headphones, plus the need for that power, means they're not best suited for use on the move, while the open-back design's leakage of sound both inwards and outwards also mitigates against their use in noisy environments or those with other people in close proximity.

Oppo has the answer with the arrival of its PM-3 headphones: they're less expensive, typically selling at £349; closed back; and easier to drive thanks to smaller 55mm diaphragms, but again

with that dual-layer spiral coil design and neodymium magnets. That makes them more suitable for use with either a personal audio device with decent output, or an external portable headphone amplifier such as the company's own HA-2 DAC/amplifier, which sells for around £250.

They're also light enough to carry around and wear, thanks to an all-up weight of 320g (heavier than many a 'portable headphone' but light in planar magnetic terms), while carefully designed clamping force means they fit solidly without becoming uncomfortable. They're supplied with two cables – a 3m one for use at home, and a 1.2m one with a choice of controls for Android or Apple phones – and a denim carrying case.

PERFORMANCE

Having enjoyed the PM-1 headphones as a reference since I first reviewed them, I have to admit I was a little concerned that the change to closed-back might compromise the wonderfully precise and spacious presentation the flagship model delivers, but the PM-3 still manages to sound both involving and open, with no sense of the music being shut inside the head, and no shortage of presence and instrumental detail.

'The Oppo PM-3 headphones are another fine addition to the arsenal of the travelling music-lover'

I tried the Oppos with my iPhone, which I hardly ever use as a music player (not least because doing so kills its battery life), and while enjoyable enough, they failed to get me terribly excited about the prospect of adding a £300+ pair of headphones to my phone. Yes, the iPhone will drive the PM-3 more than adequately, and this is probably about as good as an Apple phone is going to sound, but to these ears things are a bit anonymous and uninvolved.

However, exploring some of the other portable players and headphone amps I had to hand proved much more rewarding: the Oppos really came to life when used with the inexpensive Fiio X3 player, and were quite sparkingly entertaining with the excellent Astell & Kern AKJr, which I plan to review in a future issue. As a combination, the AKJr and the PM-3 made the kind



OPPO PM-3

Type Closed-back planar magnetic headphones

Price £349

Nominal impedance 26ohm

Sensitivity 102dB/1mW

Weight 320g without cable

Accessories supplied 3m cable, 1.2m cables with no remote/Android remote/Apple remote, 3.5mm-to-6.3mm adapter, carrying case

Finishes available Black or white

oppodigital.co.uk

of travelling music set-up I could imagine using a lot were I to have a life involving a lot of long-haul flights, combining as it does excellent noise isolation, comfort and a really fresh, detailed and yet powerfully weighty view of a wide range of music.

Yes, the sound lacks just a little 'air' in the extreme top-end, but rather than try to compensate for the closed-back design with a treble lift, the Oppo engineers have kept things sweet and smooth up there, placing the emphasis on the mid-band region where all the vocal and instrumental action is. The result is that these headphones produce a remarkably lucid and detailed view of instrumental textures and vocal techniques, and intelligibility is excellent, despite a powerful, well-extended bass.

Provided your source component is up to the task, these are also headphones able to play extremely loud should you feel the need to jeopardise your hearing, not that you should need to given the superb isolation they offer from external noise. With the combination of the excellent 'seal' provided by the high-quality synthetic leather earpads and of course those closed-back main housings, the Oppos suffer none of the leakage – in or out – possible with some rival designs. If you want better isolation from external sound than this, you need to be looking at active noise-cancelling designs.

Luxurious, comfortable and effective, the Oppo PM-3 headphones are another fine addition to the arsenal of the travelling music-lover. **G**

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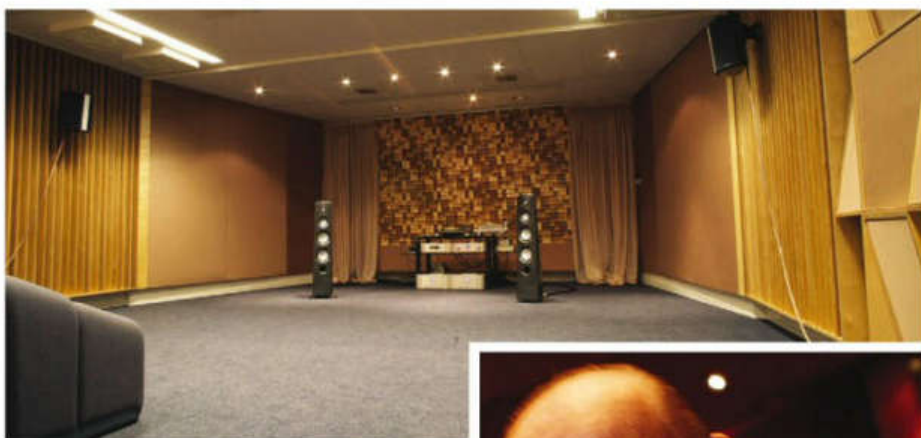
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● ESSAY

‘The various MacBooks sound different, you know’

Ken Ishiwata on some surprising discoveries in his quest to refine audio performance



Over the years, I've had many conversations with Ken Ishiwata, the man behind many of the most impressive Marantz designs of recent years, and every time we seem to digress from the subject in hand into a more wide-ranging exploration of all things audio. I only realised just how long these exchanges had been going on when, at a recent press/dealer event organised by parent company D+M Group, I heard Ishiwata tell his audience: ‘Andrew's probably the only person in this room who can remember back that far, but...’

That event was the introduction of the new SA-14 ISE SACD/CD player and PM-14 ISE amplifier (see page 137), and a few weeks later I finally had the opportunity to hear the products in the rather more controlled environment of Ishiwata's listening room in the basement of D+M's Eindhoven office. I say ‘finally’ not just because the new ‘Special Edition’ products were first previewed at the Munich High End show in May before their press/trade launch, but due to the fact I've long been hearing about ‘Ken's room’, but for various reasons have never quite managed to get out to Eindhoven to see and hear it.

Or rather not hear it: as Ishiwata explains, the room is designed as an ideal environment in which to develop, assess and demonstrate audio equipment, but the whole idea is the room vanishes out of the equation and leaves you to hear the equipment, without turning into one of those absorption-packed ‘padded-cell’ rooms too many seem to favour.

I share his view on this: if you want to test a product in an anechoic room, take it into an anechoic chamber designed



Marantz's Ken Ishiwata and his listening room

for the purpose – but whatever you do, don't try listening to it in there. I've had a few experiences of being shut into anechoic chambers – built for the scientific measurement of speakers or their components without any acoustic distractions – and the feeling of standing

‘In Ken Ishiwata's listening chamber, the room vanishes out of the equation, leaving you to hear the equipment’

on a trampoline-like metal mesh floor and only being able to hear your heart thumping is distinctly unsettling.

I also have a set of recordings Denon made back in the early days of CD in anechoic conditions – they're intriguing, but not what you'd call enjoyable.

So the Ishiwata room, built over eight months at a cost of around €160,000, has minimal absorption, but plenty of diffusers to break up any direct reflections. It's big – around 50m² – and almost all of the sound-controlling elements were handbuilt to suit

the space. Playing a mixture of CD rips, DSD 64/128 tracks and music he'd copied from LPs, Ishiwata provided intriguing insights into all things computer audio, from the software used to play music into the SA-14 ISE's isolated USB input – he favours JRiver – to the effect of the computer itself on the sound of the music.

A discussion ensued regarding the Ishiwata view of computers and audio, one aspect of which was the way defragmenting the drive on which the music is stored can improve the sound. He explains that he copied some of his music onto an external hard drive, and couldn't understand why it suddenly sounded rather poor: only after defragmenting the drive was normal service restored.

And he shared the availability of a programme called Rewrite Data by Japanese developer Hiroyuki Yokota, which performs the defragmentation process on Windows 7/8.1 PCs. If you fancy trying it, you can find it at <http://1drv.ms/1nBAKyD>, but bear in mind that the effect is apparently lost if you copy the files to another storage device – unless of course you defrag that one too! – and that the claimed effect gradually wears off, but this can be restored with a further run of the utility.

Ishiwata also suggests that playing music from solid state drives – or SSDs – is better than using conventional hard drives, and that playback software should be set to play music from an internal buffer, rather than direct from the hard drive, but things get really interesting when we start discussing the computer he's using, which is a not-exactly-new 15in MacBook Pro laptop, used simply because he thinks it sounds better than more recent models or the MacBook Air. He says he tried the more recent ones and was unimpressed, and answers my query about perhaps using as a source a Mac Mini computer ‘headless’ – ie controlled by a smartphone or tablet app – by saying, ‘No – that won't sound as good.’

His son, he says, has just ordered a new 15in MacBook Pro, so he's looking forward to hearing what, if anything, that will do for the system.

As with his tuned hi-fi products, you get the impression Ishiwata will never stop looking for – often unconventional – ways of refining audio performance. **G**

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NOTES & LETTERS

Bliss-ful broadcast • Mendelssohn problem solved • Unsung hero of Queen's birthday honours

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(In)complete Mendelssohn?

Your review of Mendelssohn's unfinished E minor Piano Concerto (June) mentions various attempts to create an acceptable finale. These range from adaptations of existing works by the composer (the Violin Concerto) to new compositions in the appropriate style. But nobody seems to have noticed that Mendelssohn has already provided an acceptable finale in his *Rondo brillante*, Op 29. I have this in a fine performance by Rena Kyriakou on LP. When played directly following the two Todd-completed movements, it sends the work off to a sparkling conclusion. The accompanying sleeve-note actually states: 'Were it not for the small symphonic scale of this work, it could well serve as the finale of a concerto.' So can someone now provide a CD set of all five complete Mendelssohn concertos for solo piano?

GD Rowley

Reading

Philharmonia's unsung hero

Following on from your news article on the Queen's birthday honours (August), I would like to add my own tribute to David Whelton – Managing Director of the Philharmonia Orchestra – who received a hugely deserved OBE.

I first met David in the dark days of the Arts Council's fatally misguided attempt to remove funding from one of the LPO, the RPO or the Philharmonia. I took over from John Willan as MD of the LPO on the day the review was announced. David, Paul Findlay, of the RPO, and I joined forces supported by our musicians and our boards to work collectively to overturn the review. Justice Hoffmann's report was masterly and helped ensure that no action could be taken. The great self-governing orchestras were kept safe.

In David I found a fellow spirit who instinctively understood the value of what we collectively contributed to London's music-making and that none of us could ever be better at each other's expense. To run a great self-governing orchestra, you need to be superhuman, with reserves of stamina, patience and diplomacy that go significantly beyond anything that could reasonably be expected – and this is quite apart from the specialist knowledge, creativity and intelligence that make the real difference. The continuing success of

Letter of the Month



'Beautiful cantata': the 1964 Proms premiere of Arthur Bliss's *The Beatitudes* is now available on Lyrita

First encounters with Arthur Bliss in 1964

In 1964 a poor Austrian student spent the summer in Sweden washing dishes in a restaurant to earn pocket money that would enable him to attend concerts in Vienna. In the bright evenings he often listened to classical music on his transistor radio. He wrote to his mother that he had heard a beautiful cantata broadcast by the BBC but had missed its title; the composer's name was Arthur Bliss. Half a century later, a retired scientist in the USA

reread his old correspondence (which his mother had preserved) and was able to determine from a complete list of Proms programmes on the internet that the cantata had been *The Beatitudes* – the very broadcast that has now been issued by Lyrita in the Itter Broadcast Collection, as I (dish-washer, scientist, and music lover) read with pleasure on page 31 of the August issue.

Bruno H Repp

North Haven, Connecticut, USA

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Please send letters responding to articles in this issue for consideration for publication in the October issue by September 21. *Gramophone* reserves the right to edit all letters for publication.

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the Philharmonia is ample evidence that David has delivered in spades.

Chris Lawrence

Wymondham

Back-up your music collection!

Andrew Everard's essay 'New to computer audio? Start here...' (Audio, September) was a very useful introduction, but

back-up needs to be considered. If one has the original CDs all is well but, if music is downloaded, an equipment failure can mean the loss of all the downloads. One cannot depend on their replacement from the original sources. The only reliable solution is an independent back-up drive.

Ian Slater

Chingford, London

OBITUARIES

Remembering two conductors and one composer, pianist and teacher

WOLFGANG GÖNNENWEIN

Conductor

Born January 29, 1933

Died July 26, 2015



Noted for his interpretations of the great Austro-German choral works, Wolfgang Gönnenwein has died aged 82.

After study at the universities of

Heidelberg and Tübingen, Gönnenwein became conductor of the South German Madrigal Chorus and, later, of Cologne's Bach-Verein. He was professor of choral conducting at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Stuttgart, whose Rektor ('President') he was from 1973-82. He was also Intendant of the Württembergischen Staatstheater in Stuttgart from 1985-92.

He made the bulk of his recordings for EMI and repertoire included Bach's *St John* and *St Matthew Passions* ('This is an example of modern German Bach interpretation at something very close to its best,' wrote Stanley Sadie in our April 1969 review of the latter), Handel's *Dettingen Te Deum* and Mozart's Requiem.

ROGER SMALLEY

Composer, pianist and teacher

Born July 26, 1943

Died August 18, 2015



Born in Swinton, near Manchester, Smalley studied at the Royal College of Music with Antony Hopkins (piano), and Peter Racine Fricker and John White (composition).

He also studied with Alexander Goehr at Morley College, and attended Karlheinz Stockhausen's Cologne Course for New Music in 1965-66, as well as Pierre Boulez's Darmstadt course in 1965.

In 1974 he went to Australia ostensibly for a three-month residency at the University of Western Australia, but two years later he returned, taking up a post at the same university's music school and remaining there for the rest of his life.

He was a prolific composer, receiving numerous commissions from broadcasters, orchestras and ensembles,

and took prizes that included the Gaudeamus Competition for interpreters of contemporary music (1966), the Harriet Cohen Award for contemporary music performance in 1968 and the APRA Classical Music Award 2007 for his orchestral composition *Birthday Tango*.

A distinguished pianist, Smalley's recordings include much contemporary repertoire as well as 'standard' fare, such as Schumann songs with Gerald English.

JOHN SCOTT

Conductor

Born June 18, 1956

Died August 12, 2015



John Scott, Organist and Director of Music of St Thomas's, New York, and formerly of St Paul's Cathedral, London, has died aged 59.

He suffered a heart attack the day after returning from a European recital tour.

Scott had led the music at St Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue – an Episcopal church very much in the spirit of the Anglican choral tradition, and boasting America's only residential church-affiliated choir school – since 2004. Prior to that, he'd served at St Paul's Cathedral for 14 years.

Born in 1956, Scott was a chorister at Wakefield Cathedral before taking up an organ scholarship at St John's, Cambridge, under George Guest, in 1974. In 1977 he became the youngest organist to appear as a soloist at the BBC Proms.

He initially held the posts of Assistant Organist at St Paul's and Southwark Cathedral, before becoming, in 1985, Sub-Organist of St Paul's and then, in 1990, its Organist and Director of Music. In 2004 he moved to St Thomas, New York, conducting the choir in services throughout the week as well as making a number of well-received recordings including, in 2013, the Requiems of Duruflé and Howells.

The choir of St Thomas recently commenced a 10-disc recording relationship with Resonus Classics – their first release, reviewed in the August issue, was of Bach motets. They also recently recorded an album of Christmas music, including works by Britten and Rutter.

NEXT MONTH
OCTOBER 2015



Celebrating Mozart, René Jacobs-style

The renowned conductor talks to James Jolly about concluding his Mozart opera series on the Harmonia Mundi label with *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*

Exploring Mozart operas on DVD

From traditional approaches to the more contemporary, Mike Ashman focuses on key productions of the composer's operas

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Møller ReWrite of Spring. *Liebman/Mazur/Aarhus Jazz Orch.* ⑆ ② **8 226117/18**

Various Cpsrs Thomas Kingo's Sacred Song Books. *Phemius Consort.* ⑆ **8 226121**

DANACORD danacord.dk

Gesualdo Madrigals (pp2013). *Musica Ficta/Holten.* ⑆ **DACOCDD60**

DELOS delosmusic.com

McAuliffe Return to Old Ireland. *McAuliffe/George/Mauro.* ⑆ **DE1046**

Puccini. Tchaikovsky. *Verdi Arias. Duets. Alieva/Antonenko/Kaunas City SO/Orbelian.* ⑆ **DE3477**

Strauss, R. *Wagner Songs. Pieczonka/Zeger.* ⑆ **DE3474**

Various Cpsrs Light of Gold. *Cappella SF/Bohlin.* ⑆ **DE3485**

Various Cpsrs Solitude – Wks for Fl & Pf. *Höskuldsson/McHale.* ⑆ **DE3447**

DELPHIAN delphianrecords.co.uk

Various Cpsrs Mynstrelles with Straunge Sounds. *Wilkinson/Rose Consort of Viols.* ⑆ **DCD34169**

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DIVINE ART divine-art.co.uk

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Ustvolskaya Cpte Solo Pf Wks. *Andreeva.* ⑆ ② **DDA25130**

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Beethoven Missa solemnis (1958). *Sols incl Schwarzkopf/Philh Orch/Karajan.* ⑆ ② **600229**

Cage Three Original Albums. *Various artists.* ⑆ ③ **600262**

Chopin Pf Wks (r1953/56). *Arrau.* ⑆ ② **600244**

Mozart Ops. *Schock.* ⑆ ⑩ **600227**

Wagner Ring des Nibelungen (pp1953). *Bayreuth Fest Op/Krauss.* ⑆ ⑬ **600253**

Various Cpsrs Five Original Albums. *Gould.* ⑆ ⑤ **600263**

Various Cpsrs World's Greatest Ballet Hits. *Various artists.* ⑆ ⑩ **600247**

DUX dux.pl
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Elgar Enigma Vars (r1975). *RPO/Del Mar.* **F** ③ ELQ482 1993
Gounod Faust – excs (r1966). *LSO/Bonyngc.* **F** ③ ELQ482 2566
Leoncavallo Pagliacci *Mascagni* Cavalleria rusticana (r1953/54). *Sols incl Del Monaco.* **M** ② ① ELQ480 7268
Mozart Bass Arias. *Corena.* **F** ③ ELQ482 0288
Sullivan Pirates of Penzance. Cox & Box. *D'Oyly Carte Op.* **M** ② ① ELQ480 7059
Sullivan Yeomen of the Guard (r1979). *D'Oyly Carte Op Company/Nash.* **M** ② ③ ELQ482 0508
Verdi Falstaff – excs (r1963). *New SO of London/Downes.* **F** ③ ELQ482 0268

Various Cpsrs Command Performance (r1962). *Sutherland/LSO/Bonyngc.* **M** ② ① ELQ480 4670
Various Cpsrs On Broadway. *Siepi/London.* **F** ③ ELQ482 0120
Various Cpsrs Virtuoso Vn (r1958). *Schneiderhan.* **F** ① ELQ482 0727

EM RECORDS em-records.com
Various Cpsrs Set in Silver – English Wks for Stgs. *Chbr Ens of London/Fisher, P.* **M** ② EMRCD032/3
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Various Cpsrs Perfect Polyphony. *Tallis Scholars/Phillips.* **B** ② GCDGIM213

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












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Carlos Acosta

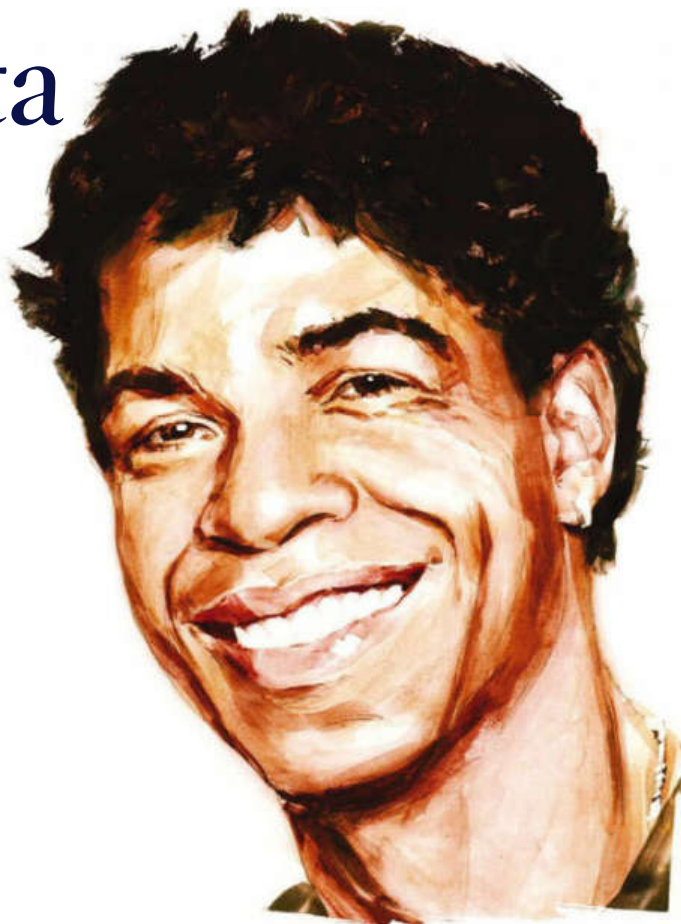
The Cuban ballet star on learning to love classical music, as well as his bold plans to re-create Bizet's *Carmen* for the Royal Ballet

My family wasn't from a classical background – we weren't considered cultural people. Another kid in my situation might have had a family member or a neighbour to point them in the right direction – to suggest books to read, music to listen to, museums to visit – but I didn't have that privilege. I didn't grow up with any exposure to classical music at all – I just assumed it was boring. Instead, I was surrounded by more popular trends – jazz, song, rhumba, salsa...and Michael Jackson! By the time I was nine, he was very famous; although American music was blocked from Cuba, people still managed to sneak it in.

My first introduction to classical was in ballet class, when the pianist would play music from operas or ballets. It was all new to me and it was only when I properly devoted myself to ballet at 13 that I started to love this music. At that point, I'd already been expelled from the National Ballet School of Cuba but then I saw a performance of *Flower Festival in Genzano*; I finally saw the purpose of what I'd been working towards. I wanted to do that, I wanted to jump like that. The dancers were very athletic, their bodies were so muscular, and I decided then and there to give it my best shot. Now that I've danced all the great ballets, the movement becomes an extension of the music. I know how to interpret it – where there is anger, passion, betrayal – and the movement reacts to the music.

I understand that some people can appreciate ballet music without the choreography. Tchaikovsky was an amazingly accomplished composer, and because he was so brilliant, his music stands alone. It's the same with Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. But for me, I can't hear music like that without dancing to it. I went to the Proms recently and saw Leif Ove Andsnes play the Beethoven Piano Concertos Nos 1 and 4. Also on the programme was Stravinsky's *Apollon Musagète*, used for the ballet *Apollo*. Of course the tempos were quite different – nobody could dance that fast! – but still I couldn't stop moving. For dancers, when we learn the music, it's already married with the movement; it's very hard to separate the two.

I'm always trying to find out things about my own heritage and culture, and this led me to explore the music of Leo Brouwer. He's a wonderful Cuban composer and guitarist, and I began buying his music to see how I could use it in my own work. And with *Tocororo*, the ballet I created in 2003, I went to a composer-friend of mine, Miguel Núñez, and he gave me a selection of music that he'd composed but never used. From there, I could determine what I needed for my ballet – what music was going to accompany the love *pas de deux*, how the whole ballet would end...Sometimes I would re-edit what he gave me to suit the choreography – a similar process to my new ballet *Carmen*...



THE RECORD I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT

Massenet *Manon*

Orchestra of the Royal Opera House /

Richard Bonyngé Decca © 2 470 5252 (6/88)

I still remember the last *Manon* I did – wonderful music, wonderful ballet, something I'll never forget!

We want to do our own thing, to put our own spin on Bizet's opera – I'm condensing the story to just three characters, *Carmen*, Escamillos and Don José – but at the same time I think there are ways to complement what Bizet did; you can add things without destroying the original concept. We're using the Shchedrin score as a base for something new – the conductor Martin Yates is providing original orchestration which will also feature voices (we'll have singers from the Royal Opera Chorus on stage during parts of the performance). I'm working with Martin on the score at the moment and it changes all the time, but we're determined not to spoil Bizet's wonderful tunes.

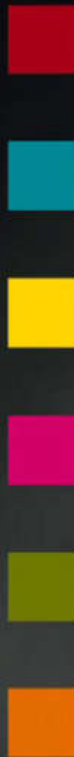
My listening habits have changed since growing up in Havana. I love opera – I've seen *Carmen* of course (I thought Jonas Kaufmann was brilliant as Don José) and a while back I saw Bellini's *La sonnambula* which had a Cuban, Eglise Gutiérrez, as Amina. She was unbelievable! There she was, a singer from a tiny city in Cuba, performing the title-role at the Royal Opera House! I was very proud. **G**

To see *Carmen* (Oct 26 – Nov 12, plus in cinemas Nov 12), visit rob.org.uk; the book 'Carlos Acosta at the Royal Ballet' is out Nov 2



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